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WORKS BY HERBERT PAUL

A HISTORY OF MODERN ENGLAND

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Vol. III. (1865 to 1876). Vol. IV. (1875-1885).

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[*English Men of Letters Series.*

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD., LONDON.

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BY

HERBERT PAUL

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IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOL. V

TT-0-30

London
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK : THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1906

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CHAPTER I

ON THE EVE

THE 8th of June 1885 is a memorable day in English history, and from it all subsequent events in this History take in some degree their colour. Mr. Gladstone, announcing his defeat to the Queen, who was, as usual, at Balmoral, explained it chiefly by the pressure of a powerful trade. The brewers and publicans of England may have had something to do with the six Liberals who voted against their party, and with the seventy absentees, but the significant item in the majority was the thirty-nine Irish Nationalists it contained. For the Nationalists were sure to be more numerous in the next Parliament, and their support would be given or withheld on Irish grounds alone. Meanwhile they had turned Mr. Gladstone out, and the Queen found herself hardly less embarrassed than she had been twenty-six years before. The circumstances were indeed very different. In June 1859 Her Majesty was ultimately driven to choose between two veteran statesmen, who had both presided over meetings of her confidential servants.[1] In June 1885 there was no man living, except the Prime Minister himself, who had ever filled that position before. Nevertheless there were personal difficulties of another kind, for since 1881 there had been no

1885.

Gladstone's defeat.

[1] See vol. ii. p. 215.

1885. Leader of the Conservative party as a whole. Sir Stafford Northcote led it in the House of Commons, and Lord Salisbury in the House of Peers. Sir Stafford was twelve years older than his colleague, and had been nominated by Lord Beaconsfield to his own vacant place in 1876. The Queen, however, sent at once for Lord Salisbury, and her choice undoubtedly fulfilled the expectation of the public. Lord Salisbury had not merely been Lord Derby's successor at the Foreign Office and Lord Beaconsfield's colleague at Berlin. He had become a great power on the platform, and was by far the most effective critic of Mr. Gladstone's Administration. But when he arrived at Balmoral, he began to make excuse. He had, he explained to the Queen, no majority, and at the same time he would not be able, as the Redistribution Bill was virtually passed, to dissolve Parliament before November. While, therefore, he and his friends were in the abstract ready to form a Government, it would be impossible for them to do so in the circumstances of the case unless Mr. Gladstone would give them specific and definite pledges. They must be allowed to wind up the session as soon as they could, to take votes in Supply whenever they pleased, and to borrow that part of the deficit for which an eightpenny income tax did not provide. Lord Salisbury seems to have thought that it was exceedingly good of him to become Prime Minister, and that he was entitled to impose upon the House of Commons such terms as he pleased. Mr. Gladstone did not see the matter in the same light, and refused to fetter the liberty of the House. Lord Salisbury then threw up his Commission, and the Court returned to Windsor, not before it was time. The Queen sent for Mr. Gladstone, and suggested a possible compromise. Knowing his extreme reluctance to resume office,

The choice of Lord Salisbury. June 11.

Salisbury's terms.

Gladstone's refusal.

June 18.

of which indeed he had already assured her, Her Majesty inquired whether some sort of guarantee for quiet possession might not be given to Lord Salisbury. Mr. Gladstone, however, while protesting that he had no desire to embarrass his successors, was resolute in declining any compact, and Lord Salisbury retired to Hatfield a private citizen. The Queen patiently persisted, and her secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, a man of infinite tact, paid the Prime Minister half-a-dozen visits in a single day. At last Lord Salisbury was satisfied with the Queen's expression of opinion that he might safely accept Mr. Gladstone's disclaimer of hostile designs, and the teacup crisis was at an end. Lord Salisbury kissed hands as Prime Minister. Mr. Gladstone refused an earldom, and remained Member for Midlothian.[1]

1885.
June 20.
June 22.
June 28.

The Premier at the Foreign Office.

The first two questions which Lord Salisbury had to decide were whom he should put at the head of the Foreign Office and what he should do with Sir Stafford Northcote. He settled the former point by taking the Foreign Office himself. Of his personal fitness for the post there could be no doubt. But it was not, as he might have reflected, without reason that every Prime Minister since Chatham had been First Lord of the Treasury, and thus practically relieved of departmental duties altogether. The essential working parts of the British Constitution are the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and the House of Commons. The collective responsibility of the governing committee to the representative branch of the Legislature cannot be enforced, nor can executive efficiency be maintained, without a real head, who can super-

[1] Mr. Gladstone on this occasion created a precedent by recommending for a peerage the head of the English Rothschilds, the first Jew to take his seat in the House of Lords under the Act of 1858. See vol. ii. p. 179.

1885. intend the whole. A Prime Minister ought to know what is being done in every public office, and to be always at liberty for consultation with a colleague. A Foreign Secretary has the hardest work in the whole Government, and if he is really to keep up with it he will not have an hour to spare. No human being, not a Gladstone, nor a Bismarck, at the height of his powers, could discharge the double functions without breaking down. But while there are strong reasons against combining the position of Prime Minister with any official duties of an onerous kind, the objections to his undertaking foreign affairs are peculiarly cogent. For if the Premier should exercise a general superintendence over all public business, it is his special duty to consider, to criticise, and, if necessary, to correct every important despatch to a British Ambassador abroad. Issues on which peace or war may hang are too serious for one man to decide, and Lord Clarendon had said to Mr. Gladstone, "I don't like to carry on single-handed a correspondence with the United States." Lord Salisbury shut himself up in the Foreign Office, and gave but a cursory attention to the politics of the United Kingdom. As Foreign Secretary he was almost a dictator; as Prime Minister he was almost a cipher.

The Earl of Iddesleigh.

The case of Sir Stafford Northcote was difficult and delicate. He had expected that the Queen would send for him. He was much respected in the House of Commons, and his services to his own party had been as valuable as they were faithful. If, as Leader of the Opposition, he had not been pugnacious enough for all his followers, his judgment and prudence in leading the whole House had never been challenged. Yet Lord Randolph Churchill and the Fourth Party had rebelled against him. They put forward Sir Michael Hicks-Beach,[1]

[1] Afterwards Viscount St. Aldwyn.

a man twenty years his junior, who had taken their side during the interregnum in the last stages of the Redistribution Bill. Lord Salisbury yielded to pressure, and Sir Stafford Northcote meekly accepted the Earldom of Iddesleigh, with the First Lordship of the Treasury, a dignified, well-paid sinecure. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach became Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons. Otherwise the "old gang" were left undisturbed, for Sir Richard Cross returned to the Home Office, and Mr. Smith became Secretary for War. The Fourth Party were well rewarded. Lord Randolph Churchill alone entered the Cabinet as Secretary for India. But Mr. Balfour was President of the Local Government Board, and the new Solicitor-General was Sir John Gorst.[1] There was some difficulty about filling the woolsack. Lord Cairns and Sir John Holker were both dead.[2] In the circumstances the Prime Minister thought of Sir Baliol Brett, Master of the Rolls. Custom proved too strong, and Sir Hardinge Giffard, who had been a Law Officer, received the Great Seal with the title of Lord Halsbury. The best terms in the official market were made by Mr. Edward Gibson,[3] Member for the University of Dublin, a barrister without practice, who was rewarded for some vigorous speeches in the House of Commons and on the platform with the Lord Chancellorship of Ireland, a peerage, and a seat in the Cabinet, which no Irish Chancellor ever had before.

1885. The Fourth Party.

The most important of all Lord Salisbury's appointments has not yet been mentioned. For

[1] The Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster, who had never sat in Parliament, was brought in for the borough of Launceston, vacated by the Lord Chancellor.

[2] Sir John Holker was made a Lord Justice of Appeal by Mr. Gladstone in 1881, and died in 1882.

[3] Lord Ashbourne.

1885. the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland he chose the Earl
Lord Carnarvon. of Carnarvon. As Lord Carnarvon was to sit in the Cabinet, while his Chief Secretary[1] was to remain outside that body, he would be himself the real Government of Ireland. His advanced views on the solution of the Irish problem have already appeared from his intercourse and correspondence with Sir Gavan Duffy.[2] He himself, departing from
July 6. all precedent, stated his own policy from his place in the Lords. So soon as the Prime Minister had made a brief speech, of no special significance, about Egypt, Russia, and Afghanistan, in which controversial matters were carefully avoided, the Lord-Lieutenant rose, and plunged into the burning question whether the Crimes Act should be renewed. He announced, in accordance with general expectation, that the Government had decided to drop it. They could do very well without it, and the full enfranchisement of the Irish people would not harmonise with the renewal of coercive legislation. Lord Carnarvon was not content with this explicit abandonment of his predecessor's policy. He went on to argue, in the presence of the Prime Minister and several other colleagues, that as Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Irishmen acted together harmoniously in British Colonies under the British flag, there could be no reason why they should not do the same in any other part of the United Kingdom. The Irish are a quick-witted people, and it does not take them long to seize the point of a situation. They pronounced this to be a Home Rule speech, and Lord Carnarvon to be a Home Rule Viceroy. They
July 7. were perfectly right. Next day Lord Carnarvon made his state entry into Dublin, and was received with a popular enthusiasm very different from the sullen respect which was all that his predecessor

[1] Sir William Hart-Dyke.

[2] See vol. iv. pp. 342-343.

could ever evoke. Lord Spencer had been closely guarded. Lord Carnarvon drove everywhere without an escort, and was cheered wherever he went. Before July was out he was back in London, where he took a momentous step. With the knowledge and approval of the Prime Minister he met Mr. Parnell in a private house. The interview was arranged by Mr. Justin McCarthy, and was kept a close secret at the time. It lasted more than an hour, and no authentic record of it exists. But Mr. Parnell asserted, and Lord Carnarvon never denied, that the Queen's Viceroy, with the assent of the Queen's Prime Minister, expressed himself favourable to the creation of an Irish Parliament with power of protecting native industries. A full account of this conversation was immediately given to Lord Salisbury, who praised Lord Carnarvon's tact and discernment in the matter. Whatever responsibility Lord Carnarvon incurred was shared by Lord Salisbury in the fullest degree. Mr. Parnell naturally believed that Lord Carnarvon would not have gone so far without the sanction of the Cabinet, and that the pretence of speaking in his own name was mere punctilio. In this, however, he was wrong. The Cabinet knew nothing about the interview, and of course they would have had to be consulted before anything was done.

1885. His interview with Parnell.

In the course of this same memorable month a debate in the House of Commons carried still further the Irish alliance with the new Government. Mr. Parnell moved for an inquiry into the conviction and execution of the Joyces for the agrarian murders at Maamtrasna in 1882. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach undertook, quite properly, that the new Lord-Lieutenant should examine the case impartially, and should consider the petition of four agrarian prisoners for release. No Minister could well say less. But he added that there was

July 17. The Maamtrasna debate.

1885. much in Lord Spencer's policy of which he could not without further knowledge approve, and Lord Randolph Churchill, going beyond his nominal leader, whom he really led, declared that the Government would be foredoomed to failure if they assumed the smallest fraction of responsibility for the official conduct of their predecessors in Ireland. Technically, of course, they were not, and could not be, responsible. No one had asked them to be. But their spontaneous repudiation of Lord Spencer excited a revolt of their own followers, and provoked a temperate remonstrance from Lord Hartington. It gave fresh point and meaning to the public dinner in honour of Lord Spencer, which was held just a week later, and attended by 300 Members of both Houses. At this dinner Lord Hartington presided, and Mr. Bright attacked the Ministerial alliance with "Irish rebels" so vehemently that his language was
July 28. brought before the House of Commons by an Irish Member as a breach of privilege. As might have been expected, the language was repeated by the illustrious offender with additional emphasis, which was all the change that any one ever got out of Mr. Bright. The union of Conservatives and Nationalists was at this time a good deal closer than the union of the Liberal party within itself. Neither Mr. Chamberlain nor Sir Charles Dilke was present at the entertainment of Lord Spencer, and it was before Lord Spencer had actually left
June 17. Dublin that Mr. Chamberlain denounced "the absurd and irritating anachronism known as Dublin Castle." "It is a system," he said, "as completely centralised and bureaucratic as that with which Russia governs Poland, or as that which prevailed in Venice under the Austrian rule. An Irishman at this moment cannot move a step, he cannot lift a finger in any parochial, municipal, or educational

work, without being confronted with, interfered with, controlled by an English official appointed by a foreign Government," meaning the Government of England, "without a shade or shadow of representative authority." He added that to reform that system would be the work of a new Parliament. After this it required some courage for Lord Rosebery to say, as he said in Edinburgh, that Mr. Chamberlain, a Radical, Lord Hartington, a Whig, and he himself, who was content to be a Liberal, could all come under Mr. Gladstone's umbrella. 1885. June 29.

The session of 1885, after the change of Government, passed otherwise smoothly enough. Nothing controversial was attempted, and therefore a good many useful things were done. Mr. Childers's eightpenny income tax was adopted, together with his proposal of a small, very small, tax on corporate property, a remnant of Mr. Gladstone's bold design for making charitable endowments contribute to the revenue in 1863.[1] The remainder of the deficit, for which the duties on beer and on landed estates would have provided, was covered by loan. The disqualification of poor voters for accepting medical relief from the rates was abolished after the Opposition had extended the term to include medical comforts and surgery. The Housing of the Working Classes Act, introduced by the Prime Minister himself in accordance with the Report of the Royal Commission, enabled the Local Government Board to pull down houses unfit to live in, made landlords who let unhealthy dwellings liable in damages, and gave the local authority power to buy disused prisons for workmen's houses.[2] The Australasian Federation Act, being Useful legislation.

[1] See vol. ii. pp. 346-347.

[2] The Commission from whom this measure really proceeded was the last opportunity of public usefulness given to Lord Shaftesbury, who

1885. purely permissive, passed without serious criticism; but New Zealand and New South Wales, by declining to take any part in it, reduced it to a dead letter. The Secretary for Scotland Bill diminished the power and patronage of the Lord Advocate, and set up a new department of Scottish Education. It satisfied a demand, it quieted a grievance, and having been brought in by Lord Rosebery, it was not unnaturally permitted by the Liberals to pass.[1] The keenest debates of the summer were held on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill for the protection of young women and children from scandalous assaults. This measure, though it had three times passed the Lords, had been twice dropped in the Commons for want of leisure. It might have been dropped again if the *Pall Mall Gazette* had not published a series of articles on the facilities which were supposed to exist for the corruption of girls. These articles, called *The Maiden Tribute*, were open to grave objection for their style and taste. But they roused public opinion, and Sir Richard Cross, assisted by Sir William Harcourt, revived the Bill, which in August became law. Although the lurid stories in the *Pall Mall Gazette* had very slender foundation in fact, the law had fixed the age of consent too low, and a few simple changes in this, as in other respects, have been of great public utility.

The first Irish Purchase Act.

All these Bills were remnants, which the Liberals would have passed if they had been in office. The Land Purchase Bill for Ireland, called after Lord Ashbourne, the Irish Lord Chancellor, who introduced it, was original, though modelled on the

Death of Lord Shaftesbury.

died on the 1st of October in his eighty-fifth year. Lord Shaftesbury said strong things, which were not always wise. But no man of his generation, and few men of any generation, devoted more time and labour to the moral, social, and religious interests of their fellow-creatures.

[1] The first Secretary for Scotland was the Duke of Richmond.

purchase clauses in the Land Act of 1881. Those clauses provided for advancing to tenants who bought from their landlords three-fourths of the purchase-money. By the Ashbourne Act the Treasury found the whole amount up to a total limit of five millions sterling, for which the Irish Church Surplus, so far as it went, was to supply a guarantee. Two more Land Commissioners were temporarily appointed to administer the Act. No sooner had this little Bill been passed than Mr. Parnell plainly stated the full extent of his demands. They were, as might be expected after his interview with Lord Carnarvon, a restoration of Grattan's Parliament, with the right of protecting native industries by taxing foreign imports, even from England. Mr. Gladstone thought this speech "as bad as bad could be."[1] Of Lord Carnarvon's proceedings he was naturally ignorant. Nevertheless, when Lord Hartington told his constituents at Waterfoot that Mr. Parnell's demands could not be considered, he received a private remonstrance from the Leader of his party, who was anxiously turning the Irish question over in his mind, and wished to shut no door. Mr. Gladstone's position at this time is so extremely interesting and important that it must be minutely examined if we are clearly to understand what followed. He had welcomed Lord Salisbury's Government in the House of Commons with what Lord Randolph Churchill called a magnanimous speech, and had supported them when they insisted that as Penjdeh was to be Russian, Zulfikar should be ceded to the Amir of Afghanistan. After that he did not appear in the House, and at the beginning of August, before Parliament rose, he took a trip to Norway for his health. In the middle of July he had written to Lord Derby, pointing out

1885.

Parnell's demands. Aug. 29.

July 6.

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 220.

1885. that Parnell might ask for repeal of the Union, or for an Austro-Hungarian scheme, or for colonial Home Rule such as Canada enjoyed. Upon these various projects he expressed no opinion of his own.

July 19. Lord Derby in reply could see nothing but difficulties, and Lord Granville seemed to agree with him, though, as Mr. Gladstone reminded them, the problem would become acute after the General Election.[1] On his return to England at the beginning of September Mr. Gladstone found the political situation more delicate and difficult than he had ever known it. On the 8th of the month Mr. Chamberlain delivered at Warrington his response to Parnell's challenge. It was as uncompromising as Lord Hartington's. Mr. Chamberlain had been ready to grant executive reform in Ireland of a popular and representative kind, but not an Irish Parliament. "If those," he said, "are the terms on which Mr. Parnell's support is to be maintained, I will not enter into the compact." Mr. Chamberlain did not understand Parnell's conduct, because, like Mr. Gladstone, he was without the key to the riddle. He himself and Sir Charles Dilke had projected a political tour in Ireland during the early part of the recess under the auspices and with the sanction of Mr. Parnell. After seeing Lord Carnarvon, Parnell declined to give his approval, and the visit was abandoned. This definite breach with the most influential Radical in England was extremely unwise, and in assuming that the Viceroy had the authority of the Cabinet Parnell committed a grievous error of judgment.

Gladstone's Address. Mr. Gladstone's first duty after his holiday was the composition of his Address to the electors of Midlothian. He was seventy-five and meditating retirement, as he had often meditated it before.

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. pp. 215-216.

But as the Nestor of the State, which he had served for half a century, the case of Ireland weighed upon him night and day. He hoped and believed that the General Election would result in a large Liberal majority from Great Britain. He knew, so far as the future can be known, that there would be a large Nationalist majority from Ireland. It would then be for the Liberal party, which under such conditions he could hardly desert, to cope with the claims of Ireland, and decide how much of them could be granted. This would be difficult enough if Liberals were united. If they were divided it would be impossible, and therefore his most pressing obligation was to keep them together. It was easy to talk of umbrellas. To find a policy, or even a formula, which both Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain would accept taxed even Mr. Gladstone's resources. That he should have achieved any measure of success is wonderful, and no other man could have avoided an open rupture. The Address, which appeared on the 18th of September, was very long and written with unusual care. Aimed rather at appeasing differences than at exciting enthusiasm, it disappointed the more ardent Liberals by the meagreness of its positive proposals and by relegating the disestablishment of the Church to the dim and distant courses of the future. If this document had been less bulky the paragraphs about Ireland would have attracted more attention. They are the only parts of it which have any interest now, and they must be set out in full. "To maintain the supremacy of the Crown," wrote Mr. Gladstone, "the unity of the Empire, and all the authority of Parliament necessary for the conservation of that unity, is the first duty of every representative of the people. Subject to this governing principle, every grant to portions of the 1885.

1885. country of enlarged powers for the management of their own affairs is, in my view, not a source of danger, but a means of averting it, and is in the nature of a new guarantee for increased cohesion, happiness, and strength." "History," he added, "will consign to disgrace the name of every man who, having it in his power, does not aid but prevents or retards an equitable settlement between Ireland and Great Britain." These were the really vital words in Mr. Gladstone's circular. But the practical politician passed them by, and pounced upon the fact that Mr. Gladstone had sided with Lord Hartington rather than Mr. Chamberlain. The practical politician was not thinking of Ireland but of disestablishment, reform of the land laws, and other perennial topics of agitation.

Mr. Gladstone's Address satisfied Lord Hartington. It satisfied Mr. Goschen. It satisfied even Mr. Forster. It did not satisfy Mr. Chamberlain, who put forward a much more advanced programme of his own, including free education, graduated income tax, disestablishment, reform of the House of Lords, and the compulsory purchase of land for allotments. Mr. Childers, on the other hand, who stood about midway between Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Hartington, proposed to his constituents at Pontefract, with Mr. Gladstone's previous knowledge and approval, a policy which can only be called Home Rule, inasmuch as it left to the decision of a legislative assembly in Dublin every subject specifically Irish. At this time, and indeed ever since Lord Carnarvon's declaration in the House of Lords, Mr. Gladstone believed that the Conservatives had finally abandoned coercion for conciliation, and that if they remained in power after the forthcoming appeal to the people, they would introduce some kind of Home Rule themselves. He must have been con-

The unauthorised programme.

Sept. 28.

firmed in this opinion after the very remarkable speech made by the Prime Minister at Newport in Monmouthshire on the 7th of October. This speech, like Mr. Gladstone's Address, is only important now for what it says about Ireland, and on that subject it is even more elaborately ambiguous. What, for example, was the definite practical meaning of these sentences :— 1885. Salisbury's speech at Newport.

"Local authorities are more exposed to the temptation of enabling the majority to be unjust to the minority when they obtain jurisdiction over a small area than is the case when the authority derives its sanction and extends its jurisdiction over a wider area. In a large central authority the wisdom of several parts of the country will correct the folly and mistakes of one. In a local authority that correction is to a much greater extent wanting, and it would be impossible to leave that out of sight in any extension of local authority in Ireland."

Did Lord Salisbury mean that he was against the reform of local government in Ireland? Did he mean that he was in favour of Home Rule? Did he mean that a Parliament in Dublin would be less dangerous and less tyrannical than the Provincial Councils which Mr. Chamberlain favoured, and with which Mr. Parnell, before he saw Lord Carnarvon, might have been content? The speech is all the more interesting when read with the knowledge that the Viceroy was a Home Ruler. Lord Carnarvon was meanwhile applying to Ireland the sympathetic policy which his amiable disposition and courtly manner made natural and congenial. He was assisted by the Under-Secretary, Sir Robert Hamilton, a Scotsman, who, like Thomas Drummond fifty years before, understood the Irish people and shared their aspirations. Lord Carnarvon's difficulty was

1885. with his colleagues in the Cabinet. When he returned to Ireland after attending a Cabinet early in August Sir Gavan Duffy found him much depressed. "We might," he said, in a phrase which Duffy took to be an echo from Hatfield, "we might gain all you promise in Ireland by taking the course you suggest, but we should lose more in England."[1] But Lord Salisbury at Newport, while the Irish vote in England was still undecided, treated Home Rule with respect, if not with concurrence. "I gathered," he said with reference to Mr. Parnell's utterances in Dublin, "that some notion of imperial federation was floating in his mind. With respect to Ireland, I am bound to say that I have never seen any plan or any suggestion which gives me at present the slightest ground for anticipating that it is in that direction that we shall find any substantial solution of the difficulties of the problem." In the opinion of most persons, as well Conservatives as Liberals, Lord Salisbury was "bound to say" whether he approved or disapproved of Home Rule. But he did not say it. On the contrary, he passed on to a defence of his determination against renewing the Crimes Act, which came very near an apology for boycotting. What was boycotting? It depended on the passing humour of the population. How could you stop it by law? If an unpopular man or his family went to mass and the congregation walked out, were they to be indicted for leaving church? Boycotting was like excommunication, and beyond the reach of the secular power. At the time when Lord Salisbury thus spoke, excommunication for political purposes was by statute a criminal offence, and good ground for setting aside the return of a Member to the House of Commons. In Ireland boycotting was rife, and boycotted persons were not merely isolated

[1] O'Brien's *Life of Parnell*, vol. ii. p. 90.

in church, but prevented from obtaining the means of subsistence. If Lord Salisbury was not bidding for the Irish vote, he was behaving with unaccountable eccentricity. 1885.

No counter-offer was made before the elections by Mr. Gladstone. Except in confidential discussions with a few friends, he kept his own counsel while he matured his plans. On the very day of Lord Salisbury's speech Mr. Chamberlain paid a visit to Hawarden, and had a long political conversation with his host. It turned less on Ireland than on other matters, for Mr. Gladstone was more desirous of reconciling the two wings of the Liberal party than of showing his own hand. At the same time he made it quite clear that if he remained in public life it would be to settle the Irish question, and for that purpose only.[1] In November Mr. Gladstone went to Midlothian, and took up his quarters at Dalmeny, the residence of Lord Rosebery. Mr. Parnell had called upon him to produce a plan, and Lord Rosebery asked him in private what answer, if any, he proposed to make. He replied in writing that it was not for the Leader of the Opposition to frame a Bill; that the question could best be settled by the Government if they had a majority in the new House of Commons; that the unfriendly relations between Liberals and Nationalists had prevented him from following the counsels of Nationalism; that the broad principles of his policy had been defined in his Address; and that to any proposal made by him the Conservatives would as a matter of course object.[2] In his first speech to the electors Mr. Gladstone put the Irish question foremost, and he never lost sight of it throughout the campaign. "It will be a vital danger to the country and to the Empire," he

Chamberlain at Hawarden.

Nov. 11.

Gladstone's appeal.

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. pp. 225-226.
[2] *Id.* 239-240.

1885. exclaimed with almost imploring emphasis, "if at a time when a demand from Ireland for larger powers of self-government is to be dealt with, there is not in Parliament a party totally independent of the Irish vote." The reception of this appeal was curious. Lord Randolph Churchill, who had the courage to contest Mr. Bright's seat in Central Birmingham, turned the argument into ridicule. Just when the Irish people, he said, have obtained a really democratic franchise, the Leader of the Liberal party asked for a majority to vote them down. Mr. Parnell regarded it as a note of defiance, and on the 21st of November, three days after the dissolution of Parliament, a Manifesto of the National League, issued by his orders, directed the Irish Nationalists in Great Britain to avenge the Liberal coercion of Ireland by voting for Conservative candidates. It was estimated that this document, couched in violent and vituperative language, handed over twenty seats, if not more, to the Ministers of the Crown. Mr. Parnell's tactics had also the effect, which he might have foreseen, of bringing Liberals into sharp collision with Irishmen in every constituency where there was an Irish vote.

The Irish Manifesto

The policy of the Government.

The General Election of 1885, however, was not ostensibly fought on Home Rule, which Lord Hartington opposed with a good deal more vigour and directness than Lord Salisbury. Various forces were at work. Mr. Gladstone's Egyptian blunders, culminating in the death of Gordon and the fall of Khartoum, weighed heavily against the Liberals, especially in London. "Fair trade," which meant retaliation against protective tariffs, won many seats for the Conservatives in the large towns. So soon as Lord Salisbury came into power he conciliated the "fair traders" by appointing a Royal Commission upon the slackness of trade. Lord

Iddesleigh presided, and there could have been no 1885.
better chairman. But free traders who were also Liberals, such as Mr. Goschen, Mr. Forster, and Mr. Courtney, refused to serve on it, so that it consisted mainly of Protectionists and Retaliationists. If it did in the end neither good nor harm, it gave Government the support of an influential class. The brewers, too, had been irritated by Mr. Childers's Budget, and were grateful to those who defeated it. The Church Defence Institution published a list, a very long list, of Liberal candidates who had promised to vote for Disestablishment, and almost every parsonage became a centre of agitation against Liberalism. On the other hand, Mr. Chamberlain's "unauthorised programme" was widely popular, and at Liberal meetings the name of Chamberlain elicited more applause than the name of Gladstone. As for the Conservatives, they had the great advantage of being in office without having had time to make many blunders. Their record was unimpeachable, and even Lord Randolph Churchill, hitherto the most reckless of partisans, had shown statesmanship at the India Office. He began, wisely enough, by putting himself in the hands of Lord Dufferin. "Our one desire," he wrote to the Viceroy, "is, in all Indian and Asiatic affairs, to be mainly and even entirely guided by your advice, and to support to the utmost of our power the policy which you may recommend to us."[1] The negotiations with Russia had passed their critical stage when M. de Giers agreed that Zulfikar should be Afghan, and the marking of boundaries went peacefully forward, guided on the British side by Sir West Ridgeway. Lord Dufferin's next performance was the annexation of Upper Burmah, spared by Lord Dalhousie in 1852.[2] The pretext

[1] Lyall's *Life of Dufferin*, vol. ii. p. 102.
[2] See vol. i. p. 271.

1885. for this enlargement of the British Empire was a fine inflicted by King Theebaw, a bloodthirsty tyrant who massacred his subjects with no more scruple than the Sultan of Turkey, upon the Burmah Trade Corporation. In 1878 he had waded through blood and slaughter to a throne by butchering eight cartloads of his own relations. He had treated the Indian Government with perpetual insolence. The real reason for action so long delayed was, however, that the King had entered into a Treaty with France for the establishment of a French bank at Mandalay. That France should acquire a position in the upper valley of the Irrawaddi would not have been consistent with the interests of the Paramount Power, so that Theebaw was peremptorily required to settle all outstanding disputes with the Government of India, and to receive a British Resident at Mandalay with power to control his foreign relations. This demand having been rejected, General Prendergast, who had assembled 10,000 troops at Rangoon, marched upon Mandalay, which was occupied without serious resistance in the course of November, when the King gave himself up, and the independence of Burmah quietly ceased.

Annexation of Upper Burmah.

In spite of Lord Wolseley's opinion that unless the Mahdi were crushed, Egypt would be in danger of invasion by his forces, the Government accepted the decision of their predecessors to leave the Soudan alone, and ordered that Wady Halfa should be fortified as the northern frontier. But the violent death of the Mahdi, a victim to the just vengeance of an outraged woman, relieved the Egyptian authorities of further apprehensions. Lord Salisbury was not, however, satisfied with the state of Egypt, conceiving that it ought to have the sanction of the Sultan, and Sir Drummond Wolff, the only member of the Fourth Party for whom no office had been found,

July 29.

Sir Drummond Wolff's mission.

was sent on a special mission to Constantinople with that object in view. After some delay he procured the recognition of the Porte, and went himself to Cairo on the pretext of assisting Sir Evelyn Baring, who did not need his help. Appointments of more obvious utility have been called jobs. But the Sultan was nominally sovereign of Egypt, and British troops were being indefinitely maintained there without the shelter of international law. The despatch of Mukhtar Pasha to Egypt as the direct representative of Abdul Hamid was regarded as an assurance to orthodox Mohammedans that in resisting British occupation they would rebel against their Caliph. The attention of Turkey was, however, diverted from Egypt by the revolt of Eastern Roumelia and its junction with Bulgaria. Prince Alexander made a public entry into Philippopolis, and a Conference of the Powers at Constantinople decided, in accordance with the opinion of England, not to interfere. Thus the principal difference between the Treaty of Berlin and the Treaty of San Stefano was wiped out. Lord Beaconsfield was dead, and Lord Salisbury had no objection to make. Singularly enough, the personage most annoyed was the Emperor of Russia,[1] who struck the Prince out of the Russian Army List. The Bulgarians had wilfully sought their own salvation, and that was an offence which could not be forgiven.

1885.

The union of Bulgaria. Sept. 22.

The union of Eastern Roumelia with Bulgaria affected many Greeks, and the Greek Government thought the opportunity suitable for extending the boundaries of the Greek kingdom. They therefore called upon the Great Powers to carry out the recommendations made by the Congress of Berlin. Failing compliance with this request, they prepared with zest for a naval conflict with Turkey, the

The coercion of Greece.

[1] Alexander the Third.

1885. prize to be Macedonia. Lord Salisbury at once
Jan. 18. proposed, and Europe agreed, that a Collective
Jan. 22. Note should be delivered at Athens prohibiting any aggressive action against Turkey, and all the Powers except France sent ships of war to Suda Bay in Crete for the protection of the Porte. Although many Liberals, especially Mr. Chamberlain, protested against this policy as tyrannical and unjust, it saved Greece from rushing on her own destruction, and of all courses open it was undoubtedly the second best. The best would have been to coerce Turkey instead of Greece, and make Macedonia part of the Hellenic kingdom. But the peace of Europe was preserved by the promptitude of Lord Salisbury, and strong as the claims of Greece for an extension of territory were, the enlargement of Bulgaria had nothing to do with them. The Colonial policy of the Government consisted in the recall of Sir Charles Warren from Bechuanaland. To Sir Hercules Robinson and his Ministers at Cape Town the presence of an imperial and independent functionary was most unwelcome. They wanted to conciliate the Dutch, and to be masters in their own house. The Colonial Secretary, Colonel Stanley, yielded to their importunity, and Sir Charles Warren was brought home, leaving Bechuanaland in the control of a Cape Colonist, who had formerly sat on the Judicial Bench, and who acted under Sir Hercules Robinson as Governor. Both parties in Great Britain had now equally adopted the principle that there should be no interference from Downing Street with the action or wishes of Colonial Statesmen even beyond the strict limits of their own jurisdiction, where the interests of their colonies were directly concerned. Sir Hercules Robinson, for his part, always aimed at keeping on good terms with the Boers, both in Cape Colony and in their own Republics.

Recall of Sir Charles Warren.

There was nothing in these foreign events, so far as they had gone by November, likely to influence British electors, and certainly nothing which cast any discredit upon the Government of the Queen. Little was said about them in the country, and though Mr. Chamberlain described the union of Bulgaria as a personal humiliation for Lord Salisbury, public meetings were much more deeply concerned with matters nearer home. Mr. Chamberlain, respectful as he was to Mr. Gladstone, fought for his own hand, directing quite as many shafts against Lord Hartington as against Lord Salisbury. He did not say much about Ireland, except to reproach Lord Salisbury for his alliance with Mr. Parnell, which was never made a topic of complaint by Mr. Gladstone. He insisted upon his own points, especially free education, and made it appear that he could not sit again in the same Cabinet with Lord Hartington, Mr. Goschen, or Lord Derby. The elections, which lasted from the 23rd of November to the 19th of December, began with some disagreeable surprises for the Liberal party. Their worst disappointment was in London. They had expected to carry the new metropolitan divisions with a rush. They were beaten by 36 to 26. In other large boroughs, where the population exceeded a hundred thousand, they were 17 to 8. Seven Liberals were returned for Birmingham, and seven for Glasgow. But Liverpool elected eight Conservatives with one Irish Nationalist, and in Manchester only one Liberal was successful. It looked as if the Government would have a majority and remain in office. Mr. Chamberlain said that this was what came of Whig timidity and half-hearted reforms. The *Times* said that if the lesson of 1874 were repeated, the fault would be with Mr. Chamberlain and his "unauthorised programme." Then, in spite of

1885. The General Election.

1885. mutual recriminations, the tide began to turn. The agricultural labourers were grateful to the man who had enfranchised them, and were caught by a promise of allotments, or, in the cant phrase of the day, "three acres and a cow." They trudged to the poll in thousands, and the counties redressed the balance of the boroughs. Mr. Gladstone's majority in Midlothian was more than ten times what it had been with the old suffrage in 1880, though he had disappointed many of his supporters by refusing to vote for the disestablishment of the Scottish Church. The special champion of the agricultural labourers, one of themselves, Joseph Arch, was returned for a division of Norfolk. When all was over, the Liberal majority, not counting Irish Nationalists either way, was 85.

Parnell's position.

But Irish Nationalists had to be counted, and made all the difference. Mr. Parnell's most sanguine expectations were fulfilled. He had eighty-four followers, who with himself wiped out the Liberal majority altogether. Not a single Liberal was returned for any part of Ireland. The rest of the Irish Members were made up of sixteen Tories from Ulster and two from the University of Dublin. That the Government should remain in office was impossible. It seemed unlikely that, if they met Parliament, they would survive the Address. On the other hand, the Liberal Ministry who succeeded them would be in constant, if not very probable, danger from a compact coalition between Conservatives and Nationalists. The independent majority for which Mr. Gladstone asked had not been granted, and the result was satisfactory to no one upon this side of St. George's Channel. The new Parliament had been summoned for the 12th of January, and the Cabinet determined to meet it. They were, of course, within their right. But they fostered the im-

pression that their alliance with the Irish still subsisted, and that they counted an Irish Nationalist as one of themselves. Only by doing so could they claim to be half the new House of Commons. The most popular member of the Conservative party, Lord Randolph Churchill, had maintained during the election a remarkable silence on Home Rule. He was committed neither for it nor against it. What he and Lord Salisbury would have said or done if the Conservatives had obtained a clear majority, with or without the Irish vote, can never be decided now. They would probably have failed, even if they had attempted, to carry their colleagues or their party for a recognition of the Nationalist demands. As it was, they could not retain power by the aid of Mr. Parnell alone. They would have required also a substantial contingent from the Liberal ranks. But while they were silent, Lord Hartington spoke out. In Lancashire, before the full result of the polling was known, he told his constituents that the Irish Nationalist Members would not represent the Irish people; that they would be "mere nominees of Mr. Parnell, who exercised in Ireland a more grinding and widespread despotism than had ever existed there in the worst days of the Land League." This allegation is not supported by the evidence. Boycotting and intimidation were directed in Ireland against unpopular landlords, or against those who took the places of evicted tenants. Lord Carnarvon's reversal of Lord Spencer's policy was so far a failure, and a brutal agrarian murder had been committed in County Kerry upon a gentleman farmer named Curtin. But that was not the point. The majorities at the Irish elections, never before equalled in the history of the United Kingdom, were far too large to have been the result of pressure or alarm. It was a case of thousands

1885.

Lord Hartington's declaration.

Nov. 18.

1885. against hundreds. In the south and west of Ireland there was practically no opposition to Parnell at all. The voting was of course secret, and the charge that electors professed illiteracy to give their votes under priestly supervision is disproved by statistics. If there were more illiterate voters in Ireland than in England, there were also, and in much the same proportion, more illiterate persons. Ireland has often been called, not without justice, a priest-ridden country. But Parnell was a Protestant, and no friend of the priests. The Church of Rome did not at first favour Home Rule, and Parnell's influence had been acquired in spite of the Church, not by the Church's aid. Moreover, there was a plain and simple method of bringing the matter to a test. Intimidation, spiritual or material, is a good ground in law for setting an election aside. Election petitions are tried without juries, and no one could impute Nationalist sympathies to the Irish Judges. After the General Election of 1885 there were only two petitions in the whole of Ireland. One was brought against a Nationalist, and the other against a Conservative. In neither case was intimidation an article of charge. The real peculiarity of Mr. Parnell's followers had nothing to do with the mode of their return, and it was one with which the law could not deal. Each and all of them were bound by a pledge to act with the majority of their party so long as they retained their seats. Such rigid, almost military, discipline would not then have been endured in England or Scotland. The people of Ireland thoroughly approved of it as a method of enforcing their claims.

Gladstone's policy.

Earnestly meditating at Hawarden on the calamitous result of the General Election, Mr. Gladstone inclined during the first half of December to a policy of waiting for the Government to

act. He thought, or at least he hoped, that the Irish problem might be solved by a combination of both English parties, such as had relieved the Catholics from disabilities, and put an end to the corn laws. He was well aware that if Ireland had not existed, the Liberal party would still have been divided, and that even his authority could scarcely keep Lord Hartington in the same Cabinet with Mr. Chamberlain. But Ireland now stood before everything else; Lord Carnarvon was still Lord-Lieutenant; and Lord Salisbury would have been hopelessly beaten without the support of the Irish vote in Great Britain. Writing to his son on the 10th of December, Mr. Gladstone said, "The question of Irish government ought for the highest reasons to be settled at once, and settled by the allied forces, (1) because they have the government, (2) because their measure will have fair play from all, most, or many of us, which a measure of ours would not have from the Tories. As the allied forces are half the House, so that there is not a majority against them, no constitutional principle is violated by allowing the present Cabinet to continue undisturbed for the purpose in view. The plan for Ireland ought to be produced by the Government of the day."[1] At this critical moment, perhaps the most critical that these volumes record, Mr. Gladstone's personal leanings towards Home Rule were known to a considerable number of influential persons. Lord Hartington knew them, and Lord Granville, and Lord Spencer, and Lord Derby, and Lord Rosebery, and Mr. Goschen, and Mr. Childers. From Lord Granville, Lord Spencer, and Lord Rosebery he had received some measure of sympathy. Mr. Childers had anticipated his chief. Rumour attributed similar intentions to the Government. 1885.

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 258.

1885. But Ministers, like wise men, kept their own counsel, and while club gossip credited Mr. Gladstone with all sorts of plans, nothing certain was known to the public, or need have been known before the meeting of Parliament in January.

Disclosure of Gladstone's intentions.

On a sudden one of those dire catastrophes occurred which affect the political histories of nations for an indefinite time. A week and a day before Christmas two newspapers, the *Standard* and the *Leeds Mercury*, simultaneously announced that Mr. Gladstone was in favour of establishing an Irish Parliament. The political information of the *Standard* was usually sound. Mr. Herbert Gladstone sat for Leeds, and the editor[1] of the *Mercury* was his friend. An explicit denial from Mr. Gladstone would have calmed the storm, and allayed the excitement. But Mr. Gladstone merely said that the paragraph was not authentic, and was a speculation upon his views rather than an expression of them. So carefully guarded and qualified a statement was universally accepted as a practical admission that the substance of the paragraph had been correct. The hubbub was indescribable. If the Liberal party had been threatened with disruption before, it was threatened with extinction now. Every issue on which the General Election was fought seemed suddenly to disappear, and Liberals who had denounced the Tory alliance with Parnell felt exceedingly foolish. Mr. Gladstone's mind had been directed for months to the study of the Irish problem. Most of his followers had been thinking of quite different subjects, such as turning out the Government and giving allotments to the agricultural labourers. By a singular coincidence Lord Hartington had written to Hawarden the day before, inquiring whether there was any truth in the rumour that Mr. Gladstone meant to

[1] Mr. Reid, afterwards Sir Wemyss Reid.

take up Home Rule. Before he could receive a reply he read the startling announcement in the Press, and Mr. Gladstone's private letter was so little reassuring to him that he wrote himself a public letter to the Chairman of his Committee in the Rossendale Division, announcing his adhesion to everything he had said about Ireland during the contest. This was a definite and formal breach between himself and his chief. Mr. Chamberlain took a less decisive line. "We are face to face," he said at Birmingham, "with a very remarkable demonstration by the Irish people." Liberals could not deny the justice of their claim. But they were not the Government. "Mr. Parnell has appealed to the Tories. Let him settle accounts with his new friends. Let him test their sincerity and good will; and if he finds that he has been deceived, he will approach the Liberal party in a spirit of reason and conciliation." On the other hand, Liberals who had just been elected to Parliament for the first time pressed upon Mr. Gladstone that the majority had a right to be in power. The first thing Mr. Gladstone did, after it was too late to do anything, was to approach the Government privately. Through Mr. Balfour, whom he met at the Duke of Westminster's, he urged that Lord Salisbury should take up the Irish question and settle it. There was, said the fervid veteran, no time to lose, for the party of physical force was in the background, and would come to the front if Parnell did not succeed. There would be more assassinations and dynamite explosions. Mr. Balfour was politely sceptical, as events showed that he was justified in being. He communicated, however, with the Prime Minister, who replied, civilly but coldly, that the policy of the Government would be stated when Parliament met. Thus co-operation was refused. Mr. Gladstone, as an old servant of the

1885.

Dec. 20.

Dec. 17.

His advances to the Government

Dec. 20.

1885. Crown and State, might have been welcomed as a counsellor, though Lord Salisbury had said before the Election that there was nothing genuine between his own Conservatism and the Radicalism of Mr. Chamberlain. With Mr. Gladstone, the Home Ruler, it was dangerous to parley, and the Government had already gone too far for many of their followers on the path of conciliation to Ireland. Lord Granville, a Liberal of great experience and an astute man of the world, regarded the situation as "positively appalling." At the close of the year a suggestion was made that Mr. Gladstone should call a meeting of the late Cabinet. He would not hear of it. "A Cabinet does not exist out of office," he wrote, "and no one in his senses could covenant to call *the late Cabinet* together, I think, even if there were something on which it was ready to take counsel, which at this moment there is not."[1] He remained at Hawarden until Parliament met, corresponding freely with Lord Granville and Lord Spencer. Between him and Lord Hartington the gulf was already wide.

The position of the Government was not to be envied. Lord Randolph Churchill, in the course of his candidature at Birmingham, boasted of Lord Carnarvon's Irish policy as a great success. Next month the Cabinet were anxiously considering whether the law was strong enough to cope with the National League. Boycotting was on the increase. Moonlighting became naturally more frequent with the shorter days and longer nights. The experiment of trusting to the ordinary law had not had a fair trial, and two men were convicted at the Cork Assizes for the murderous attack upon Curtin's farm in Kerry. Nevertheless it was possible that the Ulster Tories might attack Ministers for not maintaining order, and the value

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii. p. 269.

of the Irish vote had fallen considerably in the market. The Prime Minister invited one of his colleagues in the Cabinet, Mr. Smith, Secretary for War, to undertake the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland, not then held by a Cabinet Minister, and he undertook the duty. But nothing was said of this appointment at the time, and for more than a month it remained a secret to the public. Mr. Gladstone's attitude, on the contrary, was no secret, and the Government could perceive that it was breaking his party in pieces. The Duke of Westminster, a type of the Whigs who had rallied to him in 1876, and Mr. Lecky, the Irish historian, a lifelong Liberal, wrote to the *Times* indignant protests against making Home Rule an article of Liberal policy. An English judge, Mr. Justice Stephen, departed from the rule which imposes political neutrality upon the Bench to swell the gathering chorus of disapproval. When Parliament met on the 12th of January, public excitement was intense. Nevertheless, with slow and tedious formality, the empty nothings which preceded this dramatic session were performed. Mr. Peel was solemnly and unanimously re-elected Speaker. He was confirmed in the House of Lords, and then six hundred and seventy Members had to be sworn. This process was, however, accompanied by an incident of real historical significance. Mr. Bradlaugh had been elected by Northampton for the fifth time, and a formal protest against his claim to take the oath had been addressed to the Speaker by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, as Leader of the House. By the judgment of the Court of Appeal Sir Michael was well warranted in this course. The Speaker, however, put down his foot with peremptory decision. This, he said, was a new Parliament, and he could have no official knowledge of what had happened in a former House of

1885.

Dec. 17.

1886.

The meeting of Parliament.

Bradlaugh's admission.

1886. Commons. A duly elected Member was entitled, indeed he was bound, to take the oath prescribed by law, and the Chair could not permit any interference with this statutory obligation. So Mr. Bradlaugh took the oath, and proved himself a most valuable Member of Parliament. No further attempt was made to molest him, though it is obvious that the Speaker's ruling would have had no effect upon a court of law, and though it seemed to follow from the latest legal decision that if the Attorney-General had sued Mr. Bradlaugh for penalties, he would again have been declared incapable of sitting in Parliament. But that course was not adopted, and the failure of persecution was ignominiously complete.

Jan. 16. Carnarvon's resignation. While Members, including Mr. Bradlaugh, were being sworn in batches, the political world was startled by the resignation of Lord Carnarvon. From the published correspondence between the Prime Minister and himself, it appeared that Lord Carnarvon had only accepted the Lord-Lieutenancy for a time, and had always intended to give it up before the commencement of another session. Lord Salisbury confirmed this curious story, and added that Lord Carnarvon's policy had the support of all his colleagues in the Cabinet. Since Lord John Russell's acceptance of the Foreign Office in 1852 there had been no such eccentric arrangement, and Lord John had frankly announced his precarious tenure at the time. It was generally inferred that Lord Carnarvon's methods would be abandoned, and, as a matter of fact, the Cabinet had already adopted a Coercion Bill. Sir William Hart-Dyke followed the example of his chief by resigning; Mr. Smith attended the War Office as if nothing had happened, and there appeared to be no Government of Ireland at all. When the Queen's Speech was read, Lord

Jan. 21. Carnarvon's retirement looked more significant

than ever. The Speech was a short one, but two of the longest paragraphs in it were devoted to Ireland. "I have seen with deep sorrow," said Her Majesty, "the renewal since I last addressed you of the attempts to excite the people of Ireland to hostility against the legislative union between that country and Great Britain. I am resolutely opposed to any disturbance of that fundamental law, and in resisting it I am convinced that I shall be heartily supported by my Parliament and my people." This distinct challenge was followed by an ingenious defence of the Government for not renewing the Crimes Act, accompanied, by a strange inconsistency, with the confident prediction that the criminal law would be quite inadequate to punish moonlighters in Ireland. To describe the Act of Union as a "fundamental law" was not technically correct. The Act was less than a hundred years old, while the only fundamental law of the British Constitution is government by the Crown and the three estates of the realm. Technicalities apart, however, the Queen's Speech made it clear that Ministers were against Home Rule, and highly probable that they would bring in a Coercion Bill. No direct question of confidence was raised, and the first two nights of the session were occupied with general debate. Mr. Gladstone did not commit himself, and as "an old Parliamentary hand," advised younger Members to keep their own counsel. But that fatal paragraph, which must have been derived from him, though he did not compose it, made his opinions as notorious as they could have been made by any speech. The Liberal Leaders did not want to turn the Government out, difficult as it was to keep them in. On Saturday, the 23rd of January, Mr. Smith went as Chief Secretary to Ireland for the purpose of ascertaining the truth about the social condition of that country. On

1886.

Smith's visit to Ireland.

1886. Monday the House disposed of two amendments to the Address, one being withdrawn and the other negatived. Tuesday, the 26th, brought matters to a head. The Leader of the House gave notice that Mr. Smith, after spending a couple of days in Dublin, had made up his mind, and would introduce on Thursday a new Coercion Bill for Ireland.[1] Then Mr. Gladstone, who could expel the Government whenever he liked, resolved that they must go. Otherwise there was nothing for it but the old barren routine, and it would be waste of time to discuss a Bill which could not be passed. He communicated his intention to Sir William Harcourt, who asked him whether he was prepared to go on without either Lord Hartington or Mr. Chamberlain. He replied "Yes," feeling that this was one of the great imperial occasions when a man must not think of support.[2] The opportunity came at once. That very evening, when some preliminary arrangements had been adjusted, there was raised the question of allotments, or, in common parlance, of three acres and a cow. The consequences of this amendment were so deep and wide, that its actual terms have become an historical curiosity. They are as follows: "But this House humbly expresses its regret that no measures are announced by Her Majesty for the present relief of these [the agricultural] classes, and especially for affording facilities to the agricultural labourers and others in the rural districts to obtain allotments and small holdings on equitable terms as to rent and security of tenure." It is an unwritten rule of English politics that in an amendment to the Address "regret" implies censure, and the Govern-

[1] It appears that he had not made up his mind at all, but that his colleagues had made it up for him. See *Life of Lord R. Churchill*, vol. ii. p. 45.

[2] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. pp. 287-288.

ment accepted the challenge. The debate was unimportant. While every one was talking of allotments, every one was thinking of Home Rule. The Ministerialists were united. The Opposition were divided. Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain spoke in favour of the amendment. Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen spoke against it. At one o'clock in the morning the House divided, and carried it by a majority of 79. Lord Salisbury at once resigned, and Mr. Smith returned from Ireland to find the Cabinet defunct. 1886. Defeat of the Government. Jan. 27.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST HOME RULE BILL

1886. Gladstone's third Premiership.

ON Friday, the 29th of January, Mr. Gladstone accepted the Queen's Commission to form a Government, and on Monday, the 1st of February, he kissed hands as First Lord of the Treasury for the third time. It was the most difficult position he had ever filled in his life. The majority of 79 which turned Lord Salisbury out contained 74 Irish Nationalists, without whom it would thus have been five. Among the 16 Liberals who voted with Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen for the Government were Sir Henry James, Mr. Courtney, and Sir John Lubbock. The most notable Liberal absent from the division was Mr. Bright, but there were more than seventy others, many of whom would have voted for the amendment if it had involved no ulterior consequences. Mr. Gladstone could not fail to see that he had broken up the Liberal party. He was not in the least daunted. Nothing ever daunted him. But his difficulties were enormous. His Government was to be one of examination and inquiry. The subject of investigation was, as he told those whom he asked to join him, the possibility of establishing by law a legislative body to sit in Dublin and deal with Irish as distinguished from British or imperial affairs.[1] His first invitation was addressed to Lord Hartington, who at once declined

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 292.

it. Examination, said Lord Hartington, meant a proposal, and a proposal meant Home Rule, with which he would have nothing to do. This rebuff at the outset was a serious blow. Lord Hartington was the natural leader of those moderate, solid, unenthusiastic Liberals who gave the ship ballast in stormy seas. When Mr. Bright followed Lord Hartington's example, it looked as if even the attempt to form a Government might fail. For, while Mr. Bright's official value was very small, he had always been a true friend of Ireland, and his name carried immense weight among classes, especially Nonconformists, to whom Lord Hartington was little known. But the old man went forward undismayed. Most of the Peers who had been his colleagues refused to accompany him any further, such as Lord Selborne, Lord Derby, Lord Northbrook, and Lord Carlingford. Even the woolsack could not tempt Sir Henry James, whose bitterest opponents at Bury had been Irishmen. Mr. Goschen, as might have been expected, refused to examine and inquire where he felt no doubt. Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan reluctantly accepted the Local Government Board and the Scottish Office, on the distinct understanding that they were not committed to any definite policy. The most valuable of all Mr. Gladstone's recruits was Lord Spencer, who knew Ireland better than any other Englishman, and had purged it of serious crime at the risk of his own life. Next to him was the new Chief Secretary, Mr. Morley, whose philosophic writings had made for him a position of great influence and power. Apart from the Irish question the Foreign Office caused embarrassment. Lord Granville's failure in Egypt, and his quarrel with Bismarck, made his reappointment undesirable. He went to the Colonial Office, and the new Foreign Secretary, one of the strongest

1886.

Hartington's refusal.

and Bright's.

Dissentient Peers.

Sir Henry James.

Chamberlain and Trevelyan.

Lord Spencer.

Mr. Morley.

1886. men in the Cabinet, was Lord Rosebery. Mr. Gladstone was also fortunate in his new Chancellor, Lord Herschell, a lawyer of the highest repute, and an invaluable counsellor. The other new Members of the Cabinet were Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, Secretary for War, and Mr. Mundella, President of the Board of Trade. Sir William Harcourt became Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Childers, Home Secretary, and Lord Ripon, who had not been in the Cabinet since 1873, First Lord of the Admiralty. Lord Ripon was not again attacked for his religion.[1] Nor was the Attorney-General, Sir Charles Russell, an Irish Catholic and Home Ruler, of great eminence at the Bar, who had been returned for the Metropolitan Division of South Hackney. Bigotry dies hard and slowly, but it dies. Two Members of the Cabinet which retired in 1885, both belonging to the Radical section, were on this occasion left outside. Mr. Shaw Lefevre had lost his seat for Reading, and Sir Charles Dilke was excluded from official life by reasons unconnected with politics. One choice of Mr. Gladstone's, outside the Government, was singularly felicitous. Mr. Courtney proved himself the ablest and strongest Chairman of Committees who had ever sat at the table of the House.

Lord Rosebery. Lord Herschell.

Despite the startling and bewildering novelty of the situation, all the new Ministers who forfeited their seats were re-elected. But before they could reappear in the House of Commons an untoward occurrence, chiefly affecting the Home Office, brought ridicule and discredit upon the Administration. Trade was depressed, especially in London, where hundreds of men were out of work through no fault of their own. On a Monday afternoon a number of them met in Trafalgar

Feb. 8. The London riots.

[1] See vol. iv. pp. 142-143.

Square to demand employment. Some of the speakers called for "fair trade," and denounced foreign competition. Others, among whom was an able young democrat named John Burns, expounded the more attractive principles of Socialism. The language used was violent, if not revolutionary, and the crowd did not, as is usual in such circumstances, disperse peaceably to their homes. They marched along Pall Mall and up St. James's Street, throwing stones and breaking windows. In Piccadilly and in South Audley Street, shops were wrecked and pillaged. All this time the police had remained passive and helpless, apparently waiting in a spirit of disinterested curiosity to see what would happen next. At last a superintendent was found with sense and spirit. As the mob rushed down Oxford Street he drew a line of constables across the road, who broke up the not very formidable procession and dispersed it with ease. Nothing could be more creditable to Superintendent Thompson. But the conduct of Thompson's superiors required a good deal of explanation. Mr. Childers, though he naturally received a plentiful shower of abuse, had only entered the Home Office that morning, and had no more personal responsibility for what had happened than his predecessor, if so much. He had not even been told that anything was amiss. The Departmental Committee of Inquiry which he at once appointed laid the blame upon the Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, Sir Edmund Henderson, who forthwith resigned. His successor was a distinguished soldier, Sir Charles Warren, whom the Liberals had sent to South Africa and the Conservatives had recalled. For some days after this riot the West End of London, having lost confidence in the police, was given up to unreasonable panic. Mr. Burns and two other orators of Trafalgar Square were prosecuted by the 1886.

1886. Government, and tried at the Old Bailey for inciting their hearers to violence. But the Judge[1] summed up in their favour, and the jury, while
April 10. expressing approval of the prosecution, acquitted the defendants. Notwithstanding, or perhaps in consequence, of the prevalent alarm, a large sum of money, not far short of £80,000, was contributed to the Mansion House Fund for the relief of distress by indiscriminate almsgiving. While Lord Salisbury made the random suggestion that great public works of an unspecified nature should be set on foot in the neighbourhood of London, Mr. Chamberlain, whom he had compared with Jack Cade, sent, as President of the Local Government Board, a sensible circular to the Guardians of the Poor inviting them to deal carefully and sympathetically with cases of individual hardship.

The Greek question. On one point, of no inconsiderable importance, Ministers adhered completely to the policy of their predecessors. The advent of the Liberals, and especially of Mr. Chamberlain, to power had been regarded with apprehension, almost with dismay, by those especially interested in the maintenance of European peace. It was thought that they would refuse to join in the coercion of Greece, who would forthwith declare war upon Turkey. Lord Rosebery lost no time in dispelling these alarms. No
Feb. 18. sooner had Parliament reassembled after the official interregnum for the despatch of business than the Foreign Secretary declared with emphasis that Lord Salisbury's policy was also his own. Engagements, he said, had been made with foreign Powers from which he could not, even if he wished, depart. But he did not wish. He considered that Greece had been restrained for her own good from attacking Turkey, and that force should, if necessary, be used to prevent her from courting defeat.

[1] Mr. Justice Cave.

Accordingly the ships of the allies met at Suda Bay in Crete, and Greece was directed to disarm. On the neglect of M. Delyannis to comply with this demand the allied squadron appeared off the Piræus, and soon afterwards, at Lord Rosebery's suggestion, a blockade of the Greek ports was declared. Within a month Greece disarmed, and the blockade was at once raised. Any other course on the part of Lord Rosebery might have led to a destructive and deplorable conflict, especially injurious to Greece herself. Even if Lord Salisbury had been strong enough to insist upon the emancipation of Macedonia from the Porte, the opportunity had gone by when Lord Rosebery came into office, and he could only support the concert of Europe if he wished to avoid war.

1886. April 26. May 10. June 7.

But while in foreign policy there was for the moment no difference between one party and the other, Ireland was beginning to stir passion and resentment as they had never within the memory of the oldest politician been stirred before. It was Lord Randolph Churchill who struck the key-note, and he did not wait for the Home Rule Bill. Addressing his constituents in South Paddington, he defended his colleagues and attacked his opponents. The defence was laboured and ineffective. The attack was vigorous and telling. Lord Randolph had no present use for the Irish, and he did not beat about the bush when he denounced the "hateful, malignant domination" of the League, and declared that Protestant Ulster would never consent to Home Rule. "England cannot leave the Protestants of Ireland in the lurch." This was a very plausible and skilful line of argument, for there is a Protestant as well as a Catholic Ireland, whose existence cannot be ignored. Ulster in the strictly accurate sense of the term, geographical Ulster, was almost equally divided between Protes-

Feb. 18.

Ulster.

1886. tant and Catholic, Unionist and Home Ruler. But the Ulster of which Belfast is the centre, north-eastern Ulster, the Ulster of James the First's plantation, was predominantly and passionately Unionist. These men, Scottish rather than Irish in origin, and not Celtic at all, denied the moral right of the British Parliament to transfer their allegiance without their own consent, and it was very difficult to answer them. For no Liberal could dispute the sacred right of rebellion in the last resort without abandoning the foundation of his own creed. Lord Randolph Churchill followed up his advantage by visiting Belfast and stimulating Orange vehemence, which seldom requires stimulus, by the exuberance of his rhetoric. "Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right," he wrote to a correspondent in a telling jingle, not soon forgotten, and soon fulfilled so far as the fighting went. Very different was the tone in which Lord Hartington discussed the question of the day. He had never made a bid for the Irish vote, and he was resolute in his opposition to Home Rule. But he paid a manly tribute to Mr. Gladstone's consistent sincerity of purpose, and he deprecated any attempt to hurry the Government over their task. "When I look back," he said at the Eighty Club, "to the declarations that Mr. Gladstone made in Parliament, which have not been infrequent; when I look back to the increased definiteness given to these declarations in his address to the electors of Midlothian and in his Midlothian speeches; when I consider all these things, I feel that I have not, and that no one has, any right to complain of the declaration that Mr. Gladstone has recently made."

Lord Randolph and Lord Hartington.

March 5.

That Ministers should take time to consider their policy was natural enough, and the amount they actually took, a bare two months, was rather too short than too long. The mistake they made

was to neglect allotments, and dearly did they pay for it. The subject was in Mr. Chamberlain's department, and he was committed to it as strongly as a man could be. But of course the Prime Minister should have set his colleague to work, and not have forgotten the social issue, more social than political, upon which Lord Salisbury had been defeated. It would have been better to put off Home Rule for a year than to give up "three acres and a cow." They were, however, given up, and nothing was put in their place except a Crofters' Bill for Scotland. This measure, introduced by Mr. Trevelyan, gave fixity of tenure and fair rents, settled by a Court, to crofters, or small occupiers of sheep farms and grazing land, in the northern and western counties of Scotland. Sir William Harcourt's Budget[1] was insignificant, and the Crofters' Bill, excellent in itself, did not take the place of a general Allotment Bill. The whole force and energy of the Cabinet were concentrated upon Home Rule. Until the result of their efforts and inquiries was known no other subject could obtain the smallest degree of public attention. It soon became evident that by inquiry Mr. Gladstone meant the preparation of a Bill. The outlines of this Bill were privately shown to Mr. Parnell, who was allowed to take the confidential opinions of his principal colleagues in the House of Commons.[2] This unusual course is explained by the fact that to proceed without their approval would have been impossible, and the Irishmen justified by their secrecy the reliance of the Minister upon their good faith. Before the actual introduction of the measure Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan

1886.

Neglect of the labourer.

The Crofters Act.

[1] It was called the Cottage Budget, because it exempted from the brewing license the owners of small houses. Harcourt also removed the prohibition upon home-grown tobacco. But the duty was so high that the culture did not pay.

[2] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 320.

1886. resigned.[1] This was an exceedingly severe blow to a Government from which other distinguished Liberals had held aloof from the first. For Mr. Trevelyan had been Chief Secretary for Ireland when things were at their worst in that country, and Mr. Chamberlain was the rising hope of those stern, unbending Radicals who regarded Mr. Bright as a political valetudinarian. But nothing ever dispirited Mr. Gladstone when he was convinced of the justice of his cause.

March 26. Resignation of Chamberlain and Trevelyan.

The House which he rose to address on the 8th of April 1886 was crowded from floor to roof, and rows of chairs were introduced for the occasion. The Prime Minister, who was seventy-six, spoke for three hours and a half. His plan was to show, by a historical retrospect, how coercion after eighty-five years had failed, how Lord Salisbury's abandonment of it must be regarded as final, and how the only alternative which remained to be tried was Home Rule. His own form of the experiment could not be called timid. He proposed to set up an Irish Legislature, which for some odd reason he never would call a Parliament, in Dublin for dealing with Irish affairs. To deny that this involved repeal of the Union was a sophistical paradox. For practical purposes the Union means the legislative Union, not the connection made by conquest in the reign of Henry the Second. And if it were said that Grattan's Parliament was independent, while Mr. Gladstone's Legislative body would be subordinate, it could be at once replied that the Irish Parliament before 1782 had less extensive powers than Mr. Gladstone's Bill would confer. There was to be under

The Bill.

[1] Mr. Chamberlain was succeeded as President of the Local Government Board by an old friend of Italian independence, Mr. Stansfeld, who had not held office since 1874. The new Secretary for Scotland was a promising young Liberal, too early lost to politics, the Earl of Dalhousie, who remained outside the Cabinet.

the Bill an Irish Executive, as well as an Irish Legislature, responsible to the Lord-Lieutenant, who would hold office independently of English parties. The Legislature would be divided into two Houses, or "Orders," one to consist of the Irish Peers, who were almost all opposed to Home Rule, and Members elected under a high pecuniary qualification. The other would be made up of the present Irish representatives, a hundred and three, with an additional hundred and one chosen by all the Irish constituencies except Trinity College. The representation of Ireland at Westminster would cease unless it were proposed to amend the Act. The Irish Judges would be subject to the Irish Legislature, and the Irish Executive would control the police. The new Parliament, for such in fact it was, would be unable to deal with matters affecting the Crown, such as the Regency, which gave so much trouble in Mr. Pitt's days; with military or naval forces; with trade, navigation, and coinage; and with projects for the establishment or endowment of any religious institution. The Customs Union would be maintained, and there would be no power to impose duties on British or foreign goods. Ireland would levy her own taxes, and pay to the Treasury in London a sum amounting to one-twelfth of the British revenue. Such in bare outline was the Home Rule Bill of 1886. There was in it no separate provision for Ulster, and no guarantee against the power of a tyrannous majority. But the latter object was sought to be indirectly secured by a Land Purchase Bill, which Mr. Gladstone introduced a few days after the Home Rule Bill had been read a first time. Every Irish landlord was to have the option of selling his estate to the tenants, who would become the proprietors at once, though liable to a payment of interest at four per cent for forty-nine years. The price would be

1886.

The Land Purchase Bill. April 13-16.

1886. twenty years' purchase, the security would be the revenues of Ireland, and these would be paid by Irish officers to an imperial Receiver-General, who would see that the debt to the Treasury was satisfied before any Irish claimant could get a farthing. Under these stringent conditions the Treasury would be authorised to lend the purchase-money, and the State Authority in Ireland would be encouraged to collect the rent by receiving a sum estimated at eighteen per cent beyond what was due to the Imperial Exchequer. If every landlord desired at once to sell the whole of his property, British credit might be pledged to the amount of a hundred and fifty millions sterling. These, then, were the joint measures presented by an intrepid veteran of more than threescore years and ten to a Parliament not elected upon any Irish issue. One Bill did not improve the prospects of the other. A surrender to the Irish League, as the Opposition called it, was not made more palatable, even for its supporters, by the accompaniment of a bribe to the Irish landlords. Mr. Parnell, who disliked the Land Bill, accepted the Home Rule Bill as a final settlement with a characteristic want of enthusiasm, and an intimation that he should press in committee for better financial terms.

The turmoil which these Bills aroused in society was out of all proportion to their effect in Parliament, where they were calmly and quietly discussed. The chief interest of the debate on the first reading of the Home Rule Bill lay in the explanations of the retiring Ministers. Mr. Trevelyan's was simple enough. He had told his constituents while Lord Salisbury was in office that there could be no half-way house between Separation and the Union. In the Cabinet of Mr. Gladstone he had failed to find one. He did not consider it safe to trust an Irish Parliament with the maintenance of social order,

and the Land Bill, as a sop to a class, he repudiated altogether. Mr. Chamberlain agreed with Mr. Trevelyan on the Land Bill. But on the Home Rule Bill he took a line of his own, and a very remarkable line it was. He seized the opportunity of leaving a Home Rule Government to proclaim himself, for the first time in his life, a Home Ruler in the fullest sense of the term. Hitherto he had not gone beyond a scheme of Provincial Councils, with an Executive Council in Dublin. Now he declared that the time for such tentative measures had gone by, and that Ireland must once more have a separate Legislature of her own. Then why did he reject Mr. Gladstone's proposals? Because they were formed on the colonial model, whereas Federation was the system which ought to govern them. Here he came to his real serious objection, which Liberals found great difficulty in answering. By excluding the Irish Members the Bill sinned against the cardinal doctrine of constitutional faith that the people could only be taxed by their own representatives. It was all very well to say that Ireland through a large majority of Irish Members accepted the arrangement. On a vital principle like this future generations could not be tied and bound. Mr. Chamberlain's views on this point were logical and strong. The weak side of his position for practical purposes was that scarcely any one held it except himself. Lord Hartington and the Conservative party were against Home Rule in every shape. Mr. Bright regarded the exclusion of the Irish Members from Westminster as the one redeeming feature of Mr. Gladstone's Bill. Well might Mr. Gladstone say in his reply that his plan held the field. For solving the Irish problem there was no alternative except coercive measures, and a House of Commons, fresh from the country, had rejected the Government which proposed them.

1886.
Chamberlain's policy.
April 9.
April 13

1886. One sturdy antagonist was absent from these debates. Three days before the introduction of the Home Rule Bill William Edward Forster died at his Yorkshire house in the sixty-eighth year of his age. At any Office except the Irish he would probably have been successful, and he will always be remembered as the author of the Elementary Education Act, a statute of inestimable value. His downright, straightforward, courageous independence won him universal respect even with those who disliked his policy, and it was only in Ireland that he failed to carry with him the general sense of the community. There he pleased no one, and it was not until he resigned that even the landlords had a good word to say for him. He always did what he thought right, and he never shrank from difficulty or danger. But he did not understand Irishmen, and they did not understand him. His seat for Central Bradford was won by a Home Ruler, Mr. Shaw Lefevre, an old colleague in Government and a personal friend, whose Irish policy had always been strenuous and advanced. Bradford was thus the first English city to declare in favour of Home Rule.

Death of Forster.

April 21.

The Coalition

Before the House of Commons adjourned for the Easter Recess a great meeting was held in London at Her Majesty's Theatre, which blew the trumpet of agitation against the Bill. The chair was taken by the last Earl Cowper, who had been Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland when Mr. Forster was Chief Secretary. But the salient feature of the gathering was that Lord Salisbury and Lord Hartington appeared for the first time on the same political platform. This fact, and the enthusiasm which prevailed, were more remarkable than any of the speeches delivered. The successful phrase-maker of that time was Lord Randolph Churchill. He it was who dubbed the opponents of the Bill

Unionists and its supporters Separatists, though his own antagonism to Home Rule was entirely concealed during the General Election of 1885. But Home Rule went far beyond phrases, and cut down to the roots of political, even of social life. The Eastern Question in 1876 and the two following years provoked bitter personal hostility between political opponents. Home Rule arrayed against each other members of the same party, of the same family, of the same political club. Mr. Gladstone was accused of betraying his followers, insulting his Sovereign, selling his country, compounding with crime, bartering the convictions of a lifetime for the Irish vote. Home Rulers, among whom were some of the best men in the nation, found themselves stigmatised, even by friends and neighbours, as traitors, sycophants, and cowards, who would vote that black was white or give away their principles to please Mr. Gladstone and the Whips. Mr. Gladstone himself was compared with Judas Iscariot, and with most other bad characters in history. To find a speech in which the Prime Minister had condemned Home Rule, it was necessary to go back for fifteen years. But long after his almost accidental speech at Aberdeen in 1871, much quoted at this time, Mr. Gladstone had been brought into sharp conflict with the leaders of Irish Nationalism, and his denunciation of them had often been emphatic. It was fair and natural to remind him that he had described them as marching through rapine to the dismemberment of the Empire, and that he had put Mr. Parnell in particular into gaol on suspicion of treasonable practices. The imputation that he had changed his opinions for the sake of the Irish vote was sure to be made, though his accusers might have reflected that if the Home Rule Bill were passed, the Irish vote in the House of Commons would altogether 1886.

1886. disappear. But in truth there was something deeper than prejudice, and stronger than party spirit, in the horror which Home Rule excited. Eighty-six years may not be a very long time in the life of a nation, but it is long enough to generate a faith, the fundamental article of a creed. Canning, who died in 1827, had said that to repeal the Union would be like restoring the Heptarchy, and it was the legislative Union that Canning meant. The Act of 1800 was historically a great war measure, carried at the height of the fiercest conflict in which this country had ever engaged. By 1886 it had come to be regarded as essential to the stability of the British Constitution, an integral part of the fabric, to touch which was as the crime of Uzzah. Whigs and Tories had united against O'Connell. Why should not Liberals and Conservatives unite against Parnell? Thousands of men and women whom ordinary politics scarcely touched had grown up to consider the Union as sacred, sacred to the memory of Pitt, removed from the region of strife and dispute. A proposal to tamper with it seemed to them as wild and wanton as the deliberate surrender of British territory to a foreign foe. This temper of mind cannot be ignored by those who wish to understand the political situation in the spring of 1886.

Social horror of Home Rule.

There was also a moral aspect of the case. Mr. Parnell had flouted for years the public conscience of the British people by his attitude towards outrage and crime. Except in the case of the murders in the Phœnix Park, which were palpably injurious to his own cause, he had shown no real detestation of violence, even of homicidal violence, and had done nothing to put it down. Legally innocent as he was, he had shown a callous indifference to human suffering, and a disposition to profit by it politically. The terms in which he had recommended boycott-

Parnell's indifference to crime.

ing, sending people, as the phrase is, to Coventry, 1886.
treating them as moral lepers, even depriving them of physical sustenance, had profoundly disgusted many to whom Home Rule seemed reasonable enough in itself. To treat the opinion of Great Britain with contempt might seem the masterful policy of a strong, self-confident man in the eyes of short-sighted observers. But when Mr. Parnell demanded what the opinion of Great Britain could grant or refuse, the wisdom of such tactics appeared more than doubtful. Englishmen and Scotsmen were too just and sensible to hold Ireland responsible for isolated offences, or even for Fenian conspiracies. The tactics of the Irish National League could not be set aside as individual eccentricities or excesses. Lord Spencer came forward in a manly way to declare that he, who must have known, had never seen reason to believe in the complicity of Irish Members with crime. But he could not say that they had given the Executive any help, that they had discouraged lawlessness, or that they had abstained from charging him with murder when he brought murderers to the scaffold. Opposing a Government is one thing. Opposing the administration of the law is a different thing altogether, and can only be justified by the same causes which would justify rebellion. Mr. Bright always called the Nationalists "the rebel party," and that they would have rebelled if they had been strong enough is certain. Mr. Gladstone's attempt to meet veiled rebellion by open concession was either a great act of high statesmanship or an ignominious surrender. The question whether it was one or the other could not be discussed with academic calmness, like bimetallism or proportional representation. Both sides honestly believed that the issue was moral, that they were not contending for what was more or less expedient, but for right against wrong.

1886. A political question of the first magnitude usually raises, at least in England, some sort of religious dispute, and it was not wanting here. "Rome Rule." The popular catchword that Home Rule meant Rome Rule proved remarkably telling. Mr. Parnell himself was, if anything, a Protestant, and in politics he controlled the priests, not the priests him. But nine-tenths of his colleagues, and ninety-nine hundredths of his followers, were Catholics, nor was a single Nationalist Member returned by Protestant votes. Belfast was fiercely Protestant and stubbornly Unionist. Catholic Dublin, on the other hand, was for Home Rule. A priest-ridden nation was abhorrent to the British mind, and the cry of the Ulster Presbyterians for protection against Catholic ascendency appealed to many English Nonconformists as well as to the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The answer to these arguments was not indeed difficult. As a matter of fact, the Corporation of Dublin was far more ready to employ Protestants than the Corporation of Belfast to employ Catholics. As a matter of probability, it was not likely that the priests would have the same influence upon a self-governing community as they had upon a people with whose claim to self-government they ostentatiously sympathised. Still, the future was uncertain and the risk was great. If the Bill passed, a Catholic University would be established at the public expense, and the whole education of Ireland might be in the hands of the priests. Ireland had religious equality. There was no State Church. Trinity College, with its secular professorships, fellowships, and scholarships, was open to Catholics if they chose to go. The Catholicism of Ireland was for the most part of the extreme Ultramontane type, to which Protestantism was not only a heresy, but a sin. Could a predominantly Catholic Legislature be trusted

to treat their Protestant fellow-countrymen in a spirit of equity and fairness? The Irish Legislature was expressly prohibited from endowing a Church. But no provision, it was said, would be easier to evade, and in the case of a Catholic University not even evasion would be required. Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics agreed that "Protestantism was not a religion." The Prime Minister was believed to hold this theory, and it did not increase the confidence felt in his judgment by the Protestant people of Great Britain, who reflected with pride that Britain had always been an anti-Catholic Power. 1886.

After morals and religion it seems almost profane to talk of party. But Mr. Gladstone, besides being Prime Minister, was the Liberal Leader, and when Liberals were required to vote for Home Rule, they could not help asking themselves what the past relations of Liberalism had been with the representatives of the Irish majority. In the days of O'Connell he and his tail had given valuable assistance to the cause of free trade. Since 1846, however, Irish Nationalists had seldom been on the side of progress in the English sense. They were the enemies of Italian independence. They were the enemies of American union. They had shown no sympathy with the Christian subjects of the Porte. They had upheld sectarian education and opposed school boards. Six months ago they had attacked the Liberal Government of 1880 in scurrilous and violent terms. A great statesman like Mr. Gladstone, with his mind set on solving the problem of ages, might afford to despise such unworthy considerations. It was too much to expect that all his followers should follow his example. If Ireland could have been altogether separated from Great Britain, she might have been left to her own devices. But as that was impossible, Nationalism and Liberalism.

1886. and as Mr. Gladstone indignantly denied that he was even a Repealer, the history of Irish politics and Irish politicians could not be set aside as irrelevant. The Irish Parliament would have to deal with the whole of Ireland, and there were Irish Liberals, though they might not be represented at Westminster. Protection would indeed lie outside the sphere of the new Legislature. Nor would the Irish Members be able any longer to determine the fate of British Governments. But they could apportion Irish taxes, and levy any share they pleased upon the linen manufactories of Belfast. If Irish Nationalists had worked harmoniously with the Liberals of England and Scotland, one great obstacle to Home Rule would have been removed, though the arguments in its favour might not have been strengthened. But though the National
May 5. Liberal Association declared for Home Rule, and was followed by the local caucuses generally, there were not a few Liberals who felt with Lord Hartington and Mr. Bright that they could not trust men that had never trusted them. To play one party against another might be a clever, and was undoubtedly a simple game. Its result in 1886 had been to alienate a number of Liberals just when every Liberal vote was imperatively required. Mr. Parnell understood Ireland. England he never understood.

The prospects of the Home Rule Bill were moreover seriously injured by the Land Purchase Bill, which Mr. Gladstone declared to be inseparable from it. The Purchase Bill itself, drawn by the greatest financier of the age, gave all possible security to
British credit. the British tax-payer. Mr. Gladstone carefully avoided the mistake of bringing the Treasury into direct contact with the new proprietors of the Irish soil. He interposed the Irish State authority, so that the guarantee for repayment would be the

whole revenues of Ireland, and he gave that authority an interest in collecting the instalments of purchase-money by providing that it should obtain from the proprietors more than it paid to the officer of the British Government, the Receiver-General. But the question which agitated men's minds during the Easter Recess was not whether the Bill were a good or a bad one. It was why there should be such a Bill at all. If Lord Spencer, who knew Ireland better than any of his colleagues in the Cabinet, considered that the Irish landlords required protection from an Irish Parliament, how could that Parliament be trusted with the property and liberty of Ulster Protestants, or of those humbler persons in the West and South who had become obnoxious to the National League? Present judges might, if they pleased, retire on pensions. But what of their successors? What of witnesses in agrarian prosecutions, or of jurymen who had found verdicts for the Crown? The Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons[1] knew what he was about when he urged that the Land Bill should be introduced before Easter. For the Bill had no friends. Not a single landlord was converted to Home Rule by an offer to buy him out and let him leave the country. Many of them did not want to leave the country, and most of them detested Home Rule. Radicals disliked the idea of giving public money, or public credit, which is the same thing, to a small, unpopular, and in their eyes not a particularly deserving class. Working men who sympathised with the Irish democracy, and were quite ready to vote for Home Rule, did not see why they should pay for it. Irish Nationalists thought the Bill a mistake, and were justified by the scorn with which the landlords received it. They were quite willing to acquiesce 1886.

[1] Sir Michael Hicks-Beach.

1886. in their own exclusion from Westminster, for they felt that they would have enough to do at home. But this gigantic and futile bribe to the landlords staggered them, as well it might. Every argument in favour of the Land Bill was an argument against the Home Rule Bill. If the former was necessary, the second was dangerous, and from that dilemma there was no escape.

Some of Mr. Gladstone's old colleagues, especially Lord Selborne and the Duke of Argyll, became now his most unsparing critics and assailants. He himself regarded Lord Hartington's refusal to join the Government in February 1886 as the beginning of separation between Liberalism and aristocratic society, although no acrimonious word ever throughout this great struggle dropped from Lord Hartington's lips. The idea that politics were tending to follow the lines which divided classes took so much hold upon the Prime Minister that he expressed it in print with more force than wisdom. Being unable

May 1. to visit his constituents at Easter, he wrote them a public letter in defence and explanation of his scheme. "You have before you," he said, "a Cabinet determined in its purpose and an intelligible plan. I own I see very little else in the political arena that is determined or that is intelligible." After this vigorous exordium, and an expression of confidence in the victory of his cause, Mr. Gladstone proceeded: "On the side of our opponents are found, as I sorrowfully admit, in profuse abundance, station, title, wealth, social influence, the professions, or the large majority

Classes and masses. of them—in a word, the spirit and power of class. These are the main body of the opposing host. Nor is this all. As knights of old had squires, so in the great army of class each enrolled soldier has as a rule dependents. The adverse host, then, consists of class and the dependents of class. But this

formidable army is in the bulk of its constituent parts the same, though now enriched at our cost with a valuable contingent of recruits, that has fought in every one of the great political battles of the last sixty years and has been defeated. We have had great controversies before this great controversy—on free trade, free navigation, public education, religious equality in civil matters, extension of the suffrage to its present basis. On these and many other great issues the classes have fought uniformly on the wrong side, and have uniformly been beaten by a power more difficult to marshal, but resistless when marshalled—by the upright sense of the nation." 1886.

All this is very forcibly put, and much of it is true, but Mr. Gladstone overlooked a vital point of difference between the battles he enumerated and that in which he was engaged. In the case of free trade, religious equality, Parliamentary reform, the silent operations of the intellect were working for progress and change. It was not so with Home Rule. If Mr. Gladstone had only had to contend with wealth and title, his task would have been comparatively light. The influence of reason, the aristocracy of mind, were infinitely more formidable. Names of national, and more than national lustre outside politics were enlisted on the side of the Parliamentary Union. In science, Huxley and Tyndall; in poetry, Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne; among historians, Lecky, Seeley, Froude, and Goldwin Smith; among artists, Millais and Leighton; among philosophers, Martineau, Spencer, and Jowett were an imposing list. Most of these distinguished men had previously been Liberals. Not one of them had been avowedly Conservative. Mr. Swinburne was a Radical and a Republican. They did not stand alone. They were unusually brilliant and conspicuous examples

The aristocracy of intellect.

1886. of the fact that the intellect of the country was against Home Rule. There were, of course, a few instances the other way, such as the Lord Chief Justice of England,[1] Lord Hampden, late Speaker of the House of Commons, who knew at least what Irish Members were like, Professor Freeman of Oxford, Mr. George Meredith, and Lord Acton, reputed to be the most learned Englishman of his time. The bulk of the Nonconformists still adhered to Mr. Gladstone, though Unionism could show the names of Allon, Spurgeon, and Dale. The Church of England has always been predominantly Conservative, but some of the best clergymen have been Liberals, and many Liberal clergymen were Unionists. No Government could be charged with want of intellectual distinction which contained Gladstone, Morley, Playfair, and Bryce. But among Ministerialists they were the exceptions which prove the rule. They were valued more for their rarity.

The second reading.

The debate on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill was begun on the 10th of May, and continued at intervals for nearly a month. This great constitutional discussion was worthy of the subject and of the Assembly. The House of Commons often grows excited over matters in which a very languid interest is taken outside. But in May 1886 the only place where Home Rule could be discussed without loss of temper was the House of Commons. A deep sense of responsibility pervaded both Conservatives and Liberals. It was not the turning of an oyster-shell, but the future of the United Kingdom upon which they were called to decide, and the gravity of the issues involved sobered the most impulsive. When the Prime Minister talked about a controversy of seven hundred years it seemed a flight of imagination on his part. Yet never since

[1] Lord Coleridge.

the conquest of Ireland by Henry the Second had 1886.
England and Ireland been really one nation, whereas England and Scotland, with widely different laws, were for practical purposes the same people. Home Rulers revelled in historical analogies. Austria and Hungary were cited, though Hungary only obtained independence after Austria's defeat by Prussia. Denmark and Iceland did not seem much in point. The union between Sweden and Norway, upon which Mr. Gladstone dwelt as a permanent bond, has not proved permanent in fact. The autonomy of Finland, also cited, is no more. Italian independence had led straight to Italian union, and there was only one Parliament for the whole Peninsula. On the other hand, the American precedent, of which Unionists made so much, did not really serve them, because the Southern States might always have had what Ireland wanted, and recovered their autonomy after the war. There was in truth no real analogy. The self-governing Colonies, which for the most part sympathised with Ireland's claim, were thousands of miles away, and the only constitutional tie which bound them to the mother-country was the golden link of the Crown. That the whole of North America might still be British if there had been no attempt in the eighteenth century to govern the Colonies from Westminster and Downing Street was felt to be an argumentative anachronism, and in the circumstances of the moment immaterial. As for the Bill itself, which bristled with controversial topics, its enemies assumed that Irishmen would perversely abuse its provisions, having, as Mr. Gladstone sarcastically observed, taken a double dose of original sin. The rejection of the Bill was moved by Lord Hartington in a speech of singular directness and force. Of all men in the House of Commons he was perhaps best

1886. qualified for the task. His perfect temper, his clear head, his instinctive avoidance of irrelevancy and exaggeration told upon the House more than rhetoric, and damaged the Bill as no invective could have damaged it. Lord Hartington made no reservations, and had no half measures. Like Mr. Bright, who did not speak lest he should be drawn into personal conflict with the Prime Minister, he was in favour of one Parliament for the United Kingdom, and against Home Rule altogether. He abstained from personal taunts, but he let it be seen that when they talked about the unity of the Empire he and Mr. Gladstone did not mean the same thing. Sir Henry James pleaded for the Protestants of Ulster with all the prestige of a man who had refused the woolsack, and the prospects of the Bill began to look gloomy in the extreme. The Conservatives, though they joined in the early part of the debate, were disposed to let the two sections of Liberals fight it out, sure of profiting by the quarrel in any event.

But Lord Salisbury could not hold his tongue. Six months before, on the eve of a General Election at which the Irish vote in Great Britain would or might be useful, he had referred sympathetically to Parnell's proposals, and regretted that he saw at present no way of giving effect to them. If the perplexity were assumed, the regret was genuine enough. Nor had the moral aspect of the situation changed in the meantime. The new elements were Mr. Parnell's increase of power, the substitution of a Liberal for a Conservative Government, Mr. Gladstone's attempt to solve the Irish problem, and a consequent schism in the Liberal party. Such was the state of things when, during the debate on the Home Rule Bill, Lord Salisbury addressed the Union of Conservative Associations in St. James's Hall. His language was strong. Home Rule, he

Lord Salisbury's prescription. May 15.

said, meant separation. All races were not, as 1886.
the English race was, capable of self-government. There were, for instance, or had been, the Hottentots. There were the Hindus. He could feel no confidence in people who had acquired the habit of using knives and slugs. What, then, was to be done with Ireland? His "alternative policy was that Parliament should enable the Government of England to govern Ireland. Apply that recipe honestly and resolutely for twenty years, and at the end of that time you will find that Ireland will be fit to accept any gifts in the way of local government or repeal of coercion laws that you may wish to give her. What she wants is government—government that does not flinch, that does not vary; government that she cannot hope to beat down by agitations at Westminster; government that does not alter in its resolutions or its temperature with the party changes that take place at Westminster." As for buying out the Irish landlords, he would rather spend the money in promoting the emigration of a million Irishmen. This singular deliverance of a singular mind deserves the most careful study. Lord Salisbury's words, if the logical conclusion were to be drawn from them, meant the absolute rule of Ireland by soldiers and policemen. Instinct as they were with the Roman spirit of privilege and ascendency, they might have been used by Cicero, with very little alteration, about the inhabitants of Germany or of Gaul. Coming from Lord Salisbury a few months after his celebrated speech at Newport, when the Irish vote in Great Britain was still to be had, to call them cynical would be to damn them with faint praise. For calm audacity of assurance they may challenge comparison with any speech of Disraeli. Lord Carnarvon's interview with Parnell was still unknown, and the speaker may have hoped

1886. that it never would be known, to the public. But when Lord Salisbury talked of repealing coercion laws he must have known that, owing to him, there were no coercion laws to repeal, and that if he had spoken in October 1885 as he spoke in May 1886 the Irish electors throughout Great Britain would have recorded their votes for Liberal candidates in November. Lord Salisbury seldom, if ever, troubled himself to vindicate his own consistency. He had been a journalist, and believed that in politics as in higher things the evil of the day was sufficient thereto. When an eminent editor was taxed with inconsistency he calmly replied, "You will not find two inconsistent opinions expressed in the same number of my newspaper." Lord Salisbury started afresh each day with a blank, not a white sheet, so that his forecast of twenty years suggested the possibility of the variation in himself which he denounced so bitterly in others.

His speech afforded abundant and not unwelcome material for the remainder of the debate on the Bill. That coercion was the alternative policy of the Tories to Home Rule they had through their Chief Secretary admitted. After Lord Salisbury's performance it seemed to be coercion for twenty years, if not for ever. It was idle to say that coercion only meant restraint, and that criminals must be restrained. There is nothing more futile than a verbal dispute in the course of a serious controversy. Coercion was the recognised term in the political vocabulary for a special, and specially severe, edition of the criminal law, applied to Ireland alone, because in Ireland alone public opinion was not on the side of constituted authority. The imminence and necessity of that alternative gave the Government a strong weapon in the conflict. Yet the force even of that was weakened by

the fact that Mr. Morley had to interrupt debate on the second reading for the purpose of renewing the Irish Arms Act, otherwise called the Peace Preservation Act, which had been passed for five years in 1881. There was nothing in this statute which abridged the liberty of men who did not wish to shoot each other, and the Chief Secretary was able to plead that no one stood in more need of it than the Catholic minority of Belfast. But it showed at least that the tranquillity of Ireland was only on the surface, and Mr. Gladstone's attempt to make Lord Randolph Churchill responsible for a sort of contingent treason was a complete failure. He compared him with Smith O'Brien. That sentimental patriot, who was half crazy, proclaimed his intention to resist laws already made by Parliament. To declare, as Lord Randolph did, that Ulster would not obey an authority which remained to be created was entirely legitimate, and the servile doctrine of passive obedience came with a very bad grace from Liberal mouths. The weakest part of the Bill, or the part which Liberals disliked most, was the exclusion of the Irish Members. Cardinal Manning, one of the few English Catholics who supported Home Rule, protested that not a single Irishman could be spared. His reasons were, of course, very different from those of the Liberals. He wanted Parliamentary support for the Roman Catholic Church. They regarded exclusion as equivalent to separation, and as a departure from the principle that the people should be taxed by their own representatives. During the greater part of May Liberals were constantly subject to assiduous pressure from opposite quarters. The Liberal Associations throughout the country urged them to stand by Gladstone and the Bill, if only as the best chance of getting British reforms. Mr. Chamberlain, an adept in the arts of the caucus

1886.

The Arms Act.

1886. and the lobby, was incessant on the other side. He had said, on the first reading of the Land Bill, that he was not an irreconcilable opponent, but he very soon became one. He did not, however, at this time work much with Lord Hartington and the Whigs. Nor did he either ask or receive the assistance of the great orator who was his colleague in the representation of Birmingham. Mr. Bright stood aloof in melancholy isolation, resisting the entreaties of Mr. Gladstone, not openly appearing against him. Mr. Chamberlain devoted himself especially to wavering Radicals, who disliked exclusion and the Land Bill. He plied them with every form of remonstrance, menace, and persuasion. He was not, however, in a position to offer the most powerful inducement of all. That came from the Conservative Leaders, who undertook that no Liberal voting against the Bill should be opposed by a Conservative candidate at the next election. Short of a direct pecuniary bribe, which had not been accepted in the House of Commons for a century, there could have been no more effective form of canvassing than this, and it was in no way discreditable to those who used it. Although many excellent speeches were made from both sides of the House before the debate concluded, no private Member except Mr. Whitbread had much to say on behalf of the Bill as it stood, and its fate was really determined elsewhere.

Chamberlain's activity.

The compact.

So ominous were the signs of growing discontent with the policy of exclusion, that the Prime Minister called a meeting of his party at the Foreign Office. His difficulties were very great. For while on the one hand many Liberal Members from England and Scotland were for the weak course of withdrawing the Bill and falling back upon a Resolution, on which another Bill could be afterwards founded, Mr. Parnell strongly objected to

May 27.

The meeting at the Foreign Office.

any appearance of hesitation as certain to have a bad effect in Ireland. Mr. Gladstone endeavoured to steer a middle course. The one vital feature of the Bill, he said, was the establishment of a legislative body for dealing with matters specifically and exclusively Irish. This was all which a vote for the second reading implied. If that stage were carried, the further progress of the Bill might be suspended, and modifications could be introduced. Mr. Gladstone's statement was fully reported, and the Opposition did not fail to take advantage of it. Next day their leader raised a discussion by moving the adjournment of the House, and with the assistance of Lord Hartington elicited two valuable pieces of information. In the first place, Mr. Gladstone's offer to reconstruct the Bill, if necessary, applied only to the position of the Irish Members. In the second place (this was the crucial point), if the second reading were carried, Parliament would be at once prorogued, and the Bill would be introduced again in the autumn. A prolonged wrangle upon a dead Bill was a lame conclusion indeed. Lord Hartington might safely challenge the Prime Minister, with his unrivalled experience, to cite a precedent, or produce a parallel. The debate dragged on, for Ministers had no desire to shorten it, hoping against hope that further consideration might increase the number of their supporters. Meanwhile Mr. Chamberlain took a decisive step. He summoned to a Committee Room of the House a meeting of those Members who disapproved of the Bill, and yet believed in "some sort of autonomy for Ireland." Fifty-five came, and the question was whether they should go into the No lobby, or abstain. Mr. Bright did not attend. He hardly could have attended, for he did not believe in any sort of autonomy for Ireland. But he wrote

1886. May 31.

1886. a letter which was read. He did not wish, he said, to determine the conduct of others, but he himself should vote against the Bill. The meeting agreed to do the same, and the last chance of Ministerial success was gone.

Bright's letter.

June 1. Yet the next few days were not altogether uneventful, and Mr. Chamberlain's speech was an event in itself. He had already pronounced for Home Rule, though of the Federal rather than the Colonial type. He now told the House and the country that the proper model for an Anglo-Irish Constitution was the Act establishing the Dominion of Canada. As the Parliament of the Dominion stood to the Provincial Legislatures, so should the Parliament of the United Kingdom stand to the Legislative Body in Dublin. The Canadian system is essentially a Federal one. But the local powers of legislation at Quebec and Montreal are greater, not less than Mr. Gladstone's Bill would have conferred upon an Irish Parliament. What then did Mr. Chamberlain mean by proclaiming himself for the nonce a Federal Home Ruler? He himself said long afterwards that he had never been a Home Ruler at all. He only meant to "kill the Bill."[1] Mr. Chamberlain's account of his own motives is final and conclusive. But it may be doubted whether he would have worked so hard to kill the Bill if he had not also wished to destroy the Minister.

June 7. The last night of the debate was the most interesting of all. After a slashing attack upon the Bill and its author from Mr. Goschen, the Irish leader got up. Mr. Parnell was an incalculable force, and often disappointed his friends. But to this occasion he rose, and made, as was fitting, the speech of his life. It had, of course, been carefully thought out, and the arrangement was perfect.

[1] See O'Brien's *Life of Parnell*, vol. ii. pp. 140-141.

By no means a typical Irishman, Mr. Parnell knew 1886.
his native country as no Englishman could know it, while at the same time he was capable of discussing Irish politics in a tone of dispassionate criticism quite beyond the reach of his followers. He spoke like an Irishman, regarding the whole of Ulster as an inseparable part of Ireland, and also like a statesman, to whom disorder was repugnant, who believed that the Bill would cure it. There was no half-way house, he argued, between despotism and Home Rule. Before he sat down, Mr. Parnell distinctly stated that on the eve of Parnell's disclosure.
the General Election the Conservative leaders had offered to grant an Irish Legislature in Dublin. When Sir Michael Hicks-Beach came to wind up the debate for the Opposition, he categorically contradicted this statement. "Does the Right Honourable Baronet mean to deny," asked Parnell, "that that intention was communicated to me by one of his own colleagues, a Minister of the Crown?" "Yes," said Sir Michael in perfect innocence, "I do deny it," and he called upon Parnell to give the Minister's name. This Parnell refused without authority to do, and the matter for the moment dropped. But at the next sitting June 18.
of the House of Lords, Lord Carnarvon admitted that he was the man, though he had not informed the Cabinet of the interview. He had, however, told the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, who expressed entire approval at the time, though he now preserved a rather ignoble silence. Lord Carnarvon added that he could not support Mr. Gladstone's policy, though he forgot to explain how it differed from his own. The Prime Minister's closing speech, just before the division in the Commons, was eloquent and impressive, even for him. It contains, besides its noble peroration, one of the few light and humorous touches in his

1886. rather sombre gamut. Referring to Mr. Chamberlain's boast that a dissolution had no terrors for him, "I do not wonder at it," said the Premier. "I do not see how a dissolution can have any terrors for him. He has trimmed his vessel, and he has touched his rudder, in such a masterly way, that in whichever direction the winds of heaven may blow, they must fill his sails. Supposing that at an election public opinion should be very strong in favour of the Bill, my right honourable friend would then be perfectly prepared to meet that public opinion, and tell it, 'I declared strongly that I adopted the principle of the Bill.' On the other hand, if public opinion were very adverse to the Bill, he again is in complete armour, because he says, 'Yes, I voted against the Bill.' Supposing, again, public opinion is in favour of a very large plan for Ireland, my right honourable friend is perfectly provided for that case also. The Government plan was not large enough for him, and he proposed in his speech on the introduction of the Bill, that we should have a measure on the basis of federation, which goes beyond this Bill. Lastly—and now I have very nearly boxed the compass—supposing that public opinion should take quite a different turn, and instead of wanting very large measures for Ireland, should demand very small measures for Ireland, still the resources of my right honourable friend are not exhausted, because he is then able to point out that the last of his plans was for four provincial councils controlled from London."[1] It was not till the close of his speech that he gave in a few words a picture of the relations between the two countries, and ended with the solemn sentence, "Think, I beseech you; think

[1] The curious in such matters may like to compare this passage with the same orator's speech on Lord Derby's Reform Bill in 1859. See vol. ii. p. 202.

well, think wisely, think not for the moment, but for the years that are to come, before you reject this Bill." There was not much time to think. The House immediately divided, and at one o'clock in the morning of the 8th of June the Bill was defeated by 343 votes against 313. Although the result had long ceased to be doubtful, the majority of 30 was larger than most people expected. Ninety-three Liberals voted with the Noes, including Mr. Bright, Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Goschen, Mr. Trevelyan, Mr. Courtney, and Sir Henry James. Both the tellers for the Noes were Liberals.[1] Thus the Liberal party was broken to pieces, shattered as no political combination had been shattered since Peel disunited the Conservatives in 1846. And Peel succeeded where Gladstone failed, for he carried his Bill.[2] 1886.

The announcement of the numbers seemed for the first time to depress the indomitable Premier. But when he met the Cabinet later in the day, he had entirely recovered, and was prepared to recommend on twelve grounds an immediate dissolution of Parliament.[3] His colleagues unanimously assented, and he waited on the Queen. Her Majesty demurred to a second dissolution within seven months. But the circumstances were peculiar, and it is difficult to see what other course Mr. Gladstone could with dignity or propriety have taken. He had defeated Lord Salisbury's Government in January, and a House of Commons which displaces two successive Administrations before Whitsuntide passes sentence of death upon itself. Moreover, to shrink from taking the opinion of the The Dissolution.

[1] Mr. Brand, afterwards Viscount Hampden, and Mr. Caine.

[2] All the working men in the House, more than had ever been there before, supported the Government. The one Member of the Opposition who voted in favour of the Bill was Sir Robert Peel, Lord Palmerston's Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1861 to 1865.

[3] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 341.

1886. country upon a policy so momentous as Home Rule would have been, as the Minister said, "showing the white feather," and would have had a disastrous effect in Ireland. The remaining business of the Session was accordingly despatched with all possible speed, and the shortest Parliament of the reign came to a sudden end.

Useful measures.

One or two useful measures received the Royal Assent. The legal hour for the solemnisation of marriages was extended from the inconvenient hour of twelve to three in the afternoon, and the presence of registrars in Nonconformist churches was declared to be no longer necessary. Widows were made legal, though not sole, guardians of their children, even where other guardians had been appointed by will. Sir John Lubbock, a quiet and effective reformer, succeeded in passing a Bill to prevent women and children from being employed more than twelve hours a day, a time itself excessive, in shops and public-houses. Indian and Colonial authors received the benefit of legislative copyright for their books in every part of the British Empire.

The Imperial Institute.

India and the Colonies were conspicuous in London this summer through the exhibition of their produce held at South Kensington. This popular show was organised for commercial purposes, and was primarily a resort of pleasure-seekers. But it also served as a popular illustration of the varied resources which the British Empire contained, and of the vast multitudes, differing in race, in language, in religion, who owed allegiance to the Queen. Distinguished colonists took the opportunity of visiting the metropolis, and found that a new interest had been awakened at home in the wonderful success of a Britain beyond the sea. It was suggested that an Imperial Institute might be established in Kensington, with the Prince of

Wales at its head, for the purpose of fostering trade between the diverse parts of Her Majesty's dominions. There was nothing political in this idea. But the debates on Home Rule, followed with sympathetic interest in the self-governing Colonies, had the incidental effect of stimulating discussions upon the possible developments of Federalism. In Australia the operation of the permissive Act passed by Parliament a year before had been impeded by the refusal of New South Wales, which enjoyed free trade with all the world, to join her Protectionist neighbours, and India had nothing in common with Canada except loyalty to the Crown. No Colony treated the goods of the mother-country with any special favour, or contributed to imperial defence. But all the Colonies were determined to retain their connection with England, and the long reign of an exemplary Sovereign was an impressive symbol of imperial unity. Although Queen Victoria was Empress only of India, the diversity, if not the magnitude, of her dominions had no contemporary parallel. 1886.

The immediate result in Ireland of the vote on Mr. Gladstone's Bill was unexpected, even startling. Lord Randolph Churchill had said that if Home Rule were carried, Ulster would fight, and Ulster would be right. Home Rule had been rejected, but Ulster fought. In November 1885 the Protestant Orangemen and the Catholic Nationalists of Belfast walked arm and arm through the streets to vote against the moderate Liberalism which they both abhorred. The truce did not last long, and since Lord Randolph's visit in February the mutual hostility of rival Churches had been smouldering in an ominous manner. The appearance of the Home Rule Bill made things worse, though actual rioting did not break out till the fourth of June. On that day two thousand Protestant

The Belfast Riots.

1886. shipwrights attacked a smaller number of Catholic navvies, one of whom was drowned in the new Alexandra dock. The funeral of this man two days afterwards was made the occasion of fresh disturbance. But it was not until the defeat of the Bill became known on the ninth that the aspect of affairs looked serious, even for Belfast. On the previous day houses had been wrecked, liquor pillaged by the mob, and shots exchanged with the police. The Mayor seemed helpless, either sympathising with the Protestant rioters, or afraid to offend them. On the ninth the Riot Act, or rather the proclamation under it, had to be read in the Shankhill Road, and the police fired on the rioters. By this time the Government had assembled in the town thirteen hundred of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and four hundred soldiers, who were held for some time in reserve, until on the 13th of July their services were required, and then thirty or forty persons were taken to the hospital. Throughout the General Election Belfast was disturbed, and the success in the Western district of a Nationalist candidate, Mr. Sexton, did not allay the excitement. Mr. Morley had predicted, when he introduced the Arms Bill, that it would be first needed in Ulster, and it was so. He himself had to bring within its provisions the counties of Armagh and Tyrone. Because he did his duty in repressing disorder, guarding property, and protecting life, by the means which the law had placed at his disposal, the police were known in Orange circles as "Morley's murderers." These sanguinary and disgraceful riots are no reproach to Catholic Nationalists, the victims of unprovoked attack. Unionists traced the source of mischief to the Home Rule Bill. Home Rulers went back to Lord Randolph's speeches, delivered long before the Bill was brought in. Neither side could make party

capital out of lawless violence. For while Unionists did not care to dwell upon the barbarity of their special friends in the North, Home Rulers could hardly contemplate with satisfaction a future of internecine warfare between race and creed. The common Christianity that all these rioters professed was the one thing of which they seemed never to think. It was after some experience of Ireland that Dean Swift said, "We have enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another." 1886.

Parliament was not actually dissolved till the 26th of June. But before that date the campaign had begun, and was being prosecuted with extraordinary vigour. Mr. Gladstone in particular fought with an energy and enthusiasm which would have been remarkable in a man of half his age. Nobody could be found to oppose him in Midlothian, and he was therefore free to exert his influence in other parts of the field. In his Address to his constituents he disputed the title of his opponents to the name of Unionists. "In intention," he wrote, "we are all Unionists alike, but the Union which they refuse to modify is, in its present shape, a paper Union obtained by force and fraud, and never sanctioned or accepted by the Irish nation." There is much in the history of the Union of which Englishmen have good reason to be ashamed. But it was not to be supposed that in 1886 the ordinary elector would trouble his head about what happened in 1800. Nor did even Mr. Gladstone, so he said, desire to repeal the Union. To denunciation of a paper Union Mr. Goschen made the neat retort that Mr. Gladstone's Bill, now dead, would have left only a paper supremacy, and it was upon the facts of the present, not upon grievances of the past, that the contest turned. Mr. Gladstone did not hold out much

The General Election.

June 14.

1886. hope of serious changes in his plan of Home Rule, and he carefully abstained from pledging himself to the retention of the Irish Members. The Land Purchase Bill had been destroyed by the Dissolution, and he intimated that, as it had not been accepted by the landlords, it would not be brought in again. He was reminded that he had described it as an obligation of honour, and the Conservatives naturally made the most of it. What had the Irish landlord done for British workmen, that they should be taxed for him? The Premier's own personal popularity did not appear to have suffered
June 17. any eclipse. His journey to Scotland was a triumphal progress, and he had to make a number of short speeches by the way. His set orations
" were delivered at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester,
June 23. and Liverpool. At Liverpool he spoke to an audience of six thousand in Hengler's Circus, and nearly succumbed to the strain. But the people, or at least the majority of the electors, were not to be convinced. They failed to see what had happened to change the whole situation since the month of November, when it was perfectly well known that Mr. Parnell would have a large majority of the Irish Members behind him. The Conservative Government had been turned out for not putting an Allotments Bill in the Queen's Speech. The Liberal Government had brought in no Allotments Bill of any kind. Lord Randolph Churchill's
June 18. Address to the electors of South Paddington consisted for the most part in personal abuse of the Prime Minister not worth remembering or repeating. One phrase, however, deserves to be quoted, because it expresses in a rough way the marrow of the crisis. Mr. Gladstone really was, as Lord Randolph called him, "an old man in a hurry," in a hurry to do what he thought right while there was yet time. But among the consequences of his

haste was that the public were bewildered by the combined novelty and suddenness of his proposals, which were made articles of faith by wire-pullers and managers before quiet people with minds and memories had an opportunity to adjust their ideas. Pontifical intolerance never settles any question, and no Liberal was bound as such to be a Home Ruler. The elections began on the 1st of July, and went against the Government from the beginning. At the most critical moment, just before most of the boroughs polled, John Bright, in acknowledging his unopposed return for Central Birmingham, dealt the Government a tremendous blow. In language trenchant and emphatic even for him he denounced the Nationalists and all their works, not sparing Mr. Gladstone for his association with them. The results of this speech were momentous. Hitherto Mr. Bright, notwithstanding his vote against the Home Rule Bill, had kept silence. Now that he spoke out, he rallied the Liberal Unionists outside Parliament as no one else could have rallied them, and destroyed the last chance of many Ministerial candidates.[1] The Irish Home Rulers had good cause to regret that they turned against them by their unreasoning invective the most potent voice in England save one. Sixty Unionists were elected, without opposition, and only sixteen Home Rulers. Birmingham returned seven Unionists, including Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain. In Liverpool, Manchester, and Leeds the Government won a few seats by means of the Irish vote. Edinburgh, including Leith, was solid for the Prime Minister, and Mr. Goschen was heavily beaten in the Eastern Division. Sir George Trevelyan[2] lost his seat for the Border Burghs, Sir

1886.

July 12.

[1] Clayden's *England under the Coalition*, p. 104.

[2] Mr. Trevelyan succeeded to his father's baronetcy on the 19th of June 1886.

1886. Charles Dilke on the other side being thrown out at Chelsea. So badly did Liberals fare in London that only eleven kept their places as Metropolitan Members.

But it was in the English counties that the most conspicuous reverse was seen. "Three acres and a cow" had proved a mockery. The only acres now mentioned were the acres of the Irish landlords, and there was no cow. Small London wits had sneered at the political capacity of the agricultural labourer. Both in 1885 and in 1886 he showed himself very keenly alive to his own political interests. On the former occasion the English counties returned 152 Liberals and 101 Conservatives. This time the Liberals were 83, and the Conservatives, including Liberal Unionists, were 170. Lord Hartington had a large majority in the Rossendale Division of Lancashire, while one of the most popular landlords in England, Sir Thomas Acland, who adhered to his old friend Mr. Gladstone, was beaten in his own county by nearly a thousand votes. Even Joseph Arch went down in the fray, though no man had done more for the agricultural labourer than he. In the northern counties, where agriculture was less predominant, the Liberals held their own, and Scotland, where the principal newspaper was Unionist, still sent a large Liberal majority, though a reduced one. In Ireland Mr. Parnell's following remained exactly what it was before, until an election petition increased it by one. The final and total result of the polls, which occupied the greater part of July, was 315 Conservatives, 78 Liberal Unionists, 191 Liberals, and 86 Nationalists. The compact between Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, without which the Home Rule Bill could not have been defeated, was in almost every case faithfully observed. Before the

last returns had come in, the Cabinet met, and determined to resign at once. Mr. Parnell wished them to meet Parliament, and proceed with business as if nothing had happened.[1] As they could easily have been turned out on the Address, for the hostile majority exceeded a hundred, it is difficult to believe that this suggestion can have been seriously intended. The Government had no choice except in the manner of going out, and they chose the more dignified mode of departure. Another debate on Home Rule would have been pure waste of time. The country had repeated what the late House of Commons said, and repeated it with a good deal of emphasis. The Unionists had power, and power should always be combined with responsibility. The prospect of reconstructing the Liberal party seemed remote. But it was more likely to be realised in the long run if the Conservatives, with or without the assistance of the Liberal Unionists, were allowed to frame and publish without delay the Irish policy they proposed to substitute for Mr. Gladstone's. The first step was the retirement of the Liberal Cabinet, and they retired accordingly.

1886. July 20. Defeat of Home Rule.

[1] Morley, vol. iii. p. 347.

CHAPTER III

THE POLICY OF UNIONISM

1886. Lord Salisbury's second Government.

ON receiving Mr. Gladstone's resignation the Queen at once sent for Lord Salisbury, who was at Royat. Although Lord Salisbury's followers were much the largest party in the House of Commons, they were not a majority of the whole House, and were therefore dependent upon the help of the Liberal Unionists. It was natural, perhaps inevitable, that under such conditions he should turn to Lord Hartington and offer him a place in the Cabinet. But Lord Salisbury went further. With rare and singular magnanimity he proposed that Lord Hartington should form a Government of Conservatives, or Liberal Unionists, or both. What the Rossendale electors would have thought of this arrangement cannot be known, inasmuch as Lord Hartington, for himself and his friends, refused to accept any offices at all. They would support Lord Salisbury's Government. They would not join it. Few transactions in English politics have been so entirely creditable to both parties concerned. The great and the small are strangely mingled in the Parliamentary game. Having decided that he could not be the First Minister of the Crown, Lord Hartington had next to consider where he should sit in the House of Commons. He inquired of Mr. Gladstone whether the front Opposition bench was open to himself and

The refusal of the Liberal Unionists.

other Members of the Government which resigned in 1885. Mr. Gladstone characteristically replied that Lord Hartington had as much right to sit on the front bench as he himself had, but that a seat in the House of Commons was a symbol, and his imperfect acquaintance with Lord Hartington's opinions did not qualify him to advise.[1] In the end the Liberal Unionists sat as ordinary Members of the Opposition, while habitually voting with the Government, which may have been politically correct, but was not personally convenient. 1886.

Lord Salisbury, having become for the second time Prime Minister, reverted to former usage, and was sworn as First Lord of the Treasury. The Foreign Office was given to Lord Iddesleigh as some consolation for the ungrateful and discourteous manner in which he had been treated the year before. The man who had supplanted him was himself supplanted. Lord Randolph Churchill, at the age of thirty-six, was made Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach went to the Irish Office, then justly regarded as the most difficult in the Government. Lord Carnarvon was left out of the new Cabinet, although he had done nothing, and said nothing, of which Lord Salisbury did not expressly, and in terms, approve. His treatment was worse than Lord Iddesleigh's, and there was even less excuse for it. But he was a man incapable of acting from private resentment in public affairs, and he was always faithful to the Conservative party, though he never formally disavowed his academic belief in Home Rule. The only other appointment which attracted particular notice was the choice of Mr. Henry Matthews, afterwards Lord Llandaff, Member for East Bir- Distribution of places.

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 363.

1886. mingham, to be Home Secretary. Mr. Matthews was a brilliant advocate at the English Bar, in religion a Roman Catholic, who had been out of Parliament for many years, and had formerly sat for a small Irish borough in the Home Rule, some said the Fenian, interest. He was now, however, an orthodox Conservative, and his attacks upon Mr. Bright at Birmingham in 1885 were much enjoyed by Lord Randolph. For one member of the old Fourth Party Lord Randolph was unable to do much. Instead of succeeding Sir Horace Davey as Solicitor-General, Sir John Gorst was merely Under-Secretary for India under Lord Cross.[1] This slight had important consequences, as will in due time appear.

Aug. 19. For the moment Ministers had to deal with Ireland. When Parliament met for the despatch of business after the unanimous re-election of Mr. Peel as Speaker, no Coercion Bill, and indeed no Bill of any kind, was announced. The measures for Ireland were executive. Lord Cowper was set to preside over a Commission of Inquiry into the Irish Land Acts, while a popular soldier, Sir Redvers Buller, was employed to put down moonlighting in Kerry and Clare. This certainly seemed a grotesque appointment. "To commission a General to hunt down little handfuls of peasants who, with blackened faces and rude firearms, crept stealthily in the dead of night round lonely cabins in the remote hillsides and glens of Kerry, was hardly more sensible than it would be to send a squadron of lifeguards to catch pickpockets in a London slum."[2] Sir Redvers Buller, however, was an English landlord as well as a soldier, and his visit to the west of Ireland made an impression upon him which he did not long

Lord Salisbury's Irish policy.

[1] Formerly Sir Richard Cross.

[2] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 362.

keep to himself. Little was expected from Lord Cowper's Commission after Lord Salisbury, by way of beginning twenty years of resolute government, had told the House of Lords in the debate on the Address that the Government did not contemplate any revision of judicial rents. "We do not think it honest, in the first place, and we think it would be exceedingly inexpedient." The Prime Minister even suggested that those crafty men the Sub-Commissioners had foreseen the fall in agricultural prices throughout Ireland when they fixed the judicial rents. Mr. Parnell, naturally enough, did not take that view. A political rather than an agrarian reformer, he desired for his own purposes to work with the Liberal party, and he wanted, as a precaution, a quiet winter in Ireland. Accordingly he introduced a Bill, not very skilfully framed, and modified more than once, for giving immediate relief to tenants in distress. He proposed that the Land Court should have power to reduce any judicial rent fixed before 1885; that on payment of half the rent with arrears evictions should be suspended; and that lease-holders should be included in the Act of 1881. Mr. Gladstone came back from a holiday in Bavaria to support this Bill. But in the eyes of Unionists that was a second reason for repudiating any proposal that came from Mr. Parnell, and the Bill was rejected by a majority of 95.

1886. Mr. Parnell's Land Bill.

The first result of this vote was the Plan of Campaign, drawn up during Mr. Parnell's illness, and absence from the scene, by Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Dillon, and Mr. Healy. The plan was this. All tenants of any Irish estate who considered their rents too high met and agreed what they would offer to the landlord. If the landlord refused the offer, the money was paid to trustees for the purpose of resisting evictions. The Irish

The Plan of Campaign. Sept. 22.

1886. Dec. 14. Judges declared this to be a criminal conspiracy, and proceedings were taken by the Government against the leading campaigners. It was, however, successfully adopted on several estates, beginning with Lord Clanricarde's in County Galway, not so much because his rents were excessive as because he was an unpopular absentee. While, on the one hand, this clearly illegal system saved many Irish tenants from ruin and starvation, it estranged public opinion in England from a cause which required such support. Mr. Parnell disapproved of it, and had no responsibility for it. Mr. Gladstone, however, would not condemn it, holding it to be the direct consequence of Ministerial policy. To Lord Hartington's pertinent inquiry whether it was a legitimate consequence he vouchsafed no reply. The Irish Government were in a difficult position. The Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Londonderry, was a typical representative of Protestant Ulster, being of the house and lineage of Castlereagh. The Under-Secretary, Sir Robert Hamilton, suspected of Nationalist sympathies, was induced to accept the Governorship of Tasmania, and was succeeded by Sir Redvers Buller. Hamilton had been appointed to Dublin Castle in 1882 after the murders in the Phœnix Park, and had won the confidence of the people more than any of his predecessors since the death of Drummond in 1840. But that very fact made him unpalatable to the "loyal minority," who did not know the effect produced upon Sir Redvers Buller by his experience in Kerry and Clare. Sir Redvers had in fact impressed upon the Chief Secretary the inability of many tenants threatened with eviction to pay their rents, and the Chief Secretary endeavoured to put upon the less placable landlords what he called "pressure within the law," by intimating

Sir Redvers Buller. Nov. 19.

that the Government were not bound to assist evictions of which they disapproved But in this benevolent attempt Sir Michael Hicks-Beach came into collision with the law itself. Before passing sentence upon some men for obstructing evictions upon Lord Clanricarde's estate, Chief Baron Palles, a model of judicial learning and impartiality, severely censured the inaction of the magistrates and police. Nor did he stop there. He read a solemn lecture to the Executive Government upon their responsibility for public order. He pointed out that a landlord was entitled to receive his rent, and to evict any tenant who did not pay it. If the process-server were attacked, the Government were bound to defend him with the whole force at their disposal; and every officer of the State in Ireland excepting the Lord-Lieutenant, but including the Chief Secretary, was liable to prosecution for failure in this duty. So much for pressure within the law. Outside the Plan of Campaign, a criminal though a successful organisation, Parliament alone could give the Irish tenant any effective aid.

1886. "Pressure within the law." Condemned from the Bench.

Meanwhile a powerful personality was dominating English politics. During the short Session which began in August, and ended in September, Lord Randolph Churchill had led the House of Commons with admirable skill and tact. The chief business had been Supply, and Mr. Courtney, a prominent Unionist, had fortunately been retained in the Chairmanship of Committees. But the Leader of the House has more delicate functions to discharge, and the most irreconcilable Irishmen admitted that Lord Randolph had discharged them well. One measure which he carried in the usually slack time of September was at once beneficial to his party and defensible on moral grounds. He discontinued by means of a simple statute the

Lord Randolph Churchill.

1886. annual grant of ten thousand pounds from the Consolidated Fund for secret service. This money was entrusted to the absolute discretion of the Patronage Secretary, the Government's Chief Whip, and had by both sides been used to pay the expenses of Ministerial candidates at Parliamentary elections. Such a method of enabling poor men to enter the House of Commons could not on principle be justified, while at the same time its abolition was most disadvantageous to a party which had recently lost, by taking up Home Rule, a large contingent of its wealthiest members. A smaller financial measure carried this year gave effect to a vote of the previous Parliament by putting upon the metropolitan rates the expenses of those London parks, such as Battersea, Victoria, and Kennington, which were not under the direct control of the Crown.

Oct. 2. His Dartford speech.

Scarcely had Parliament risen when Lord Randolph addressed a public meeting at Dartford in Kent, and sketched a political programme for the ensuing year. The chief points in it, not remarkable for their Conservative character, were closure by a simple majority, an Allotments Bill, a Land Transfer Bill, a Local Government Bill, a Bill to make the landlord instead of the tenant liable for tithe, a Railway Rates Bill, and a comprehensive scheme of public economy. Measures like these were less suited to the Conservative party than to their Liberal allies. But the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a man of receptive mind, with knowledge unequal to his capacity, and few preconceived ideas, was gradually submitting to the influence of teachers he had never known before. The permanent staff of the Treasury, the ablest financiers in the world, were making him better acquainted with the rudiments of political economy. They had an apt pupil; and his progress was so rapid

that when the Metropolitan Board of Works asked him to introduce a Bill for the maintenance of the duties they had been in the habit of levying on coal and wine, they met with a peremptory refusal. These taxes, familiar on the Continent as *octrois*, were contrary to free trade, and Lord Randolph would have nothing to do with them. He was at this time occupied in framing a comprehensive Budget, most ably conceived, and most skilfully framed, which would give effect to his promises of diminished expenditure.[1] The First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord George Hamilton, and the Secretary for War, Mr. Smith, protested against any reduction of the Estimates proposed. Lord Salisbury did not feel that the state of the Continent justified him in overruling them, even if he could have carried his Cabinet with him, and two days before Christmas the *Times* announced that Lord Randolph Churchill had resigned.

1886. Nov. 18.

The coal and wine dues.

Resignation of Lord Randolph.

Thus closed, practically for ever, the public career of a most remarkable man. Lord Randolph Churchill had no very deep convictions. He was a demagogue, who happened to have been born an aristocratic Tory. In Opposition he was reckless and unscrupulous, though a "first-class fighting man." In office he was full of zeal, energy, and public spirit. He had nothing to gain by the enforcement of economy, in the endeavour to secure which he wrecked his career. "Believe me, I pray you," he wrote to Lord Salisbury, "that it is not niggardly cheeseparing or Treasury crabbedness, but only considerations of high State policy which compel me to sever ties

[1] This masterly scheme would have increased the estate duties by 4½ millions and the house duties by 1½ millions; reduced the duty on tea by twopence, and the duty on tobacco by fourpence, in the pound; and lowered the income tax from eightpence to fivepence.

See *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, by Winston Churchill, M.P., vol. ii. pp. 191-192.

1886. in many ways most binding and pleasant."[1] His conduct, however, on this occasion was indefensible by precedent. Mr. Gladstone, who had a very high opinion of his Parliamentary ability, pronounced that his claim to control the Army and Navy Estimates was inadmissible. The manner of his resignation was irregular, if not disrespectful to the Queen, and he never recovered from it. But for several years in the House of Commons, and for a few months in Downing Street, he wielded a most formidable power. He deserved better than Disraeli to be called the Red Indian of debate. On a platform he could draw a crowd, and hold a crowd, better than any other man on his side in England. He was a good Secretary for India. He would have been a great Chancellor of the Exchequer if the sons of Zeruiah had not been too hard for him. He did not know the men with whom he had to deal. The very colleagues who applauded his speeches turned away from his practical proposals, and the dead-weight of Conservatism crushed him. He would have led a Labour Party, if there had been a Labour Party willing to be led from outside. But when Lord Halsbury wrote to him about the "old Toryism" of his speeches, he was talking nonsense. There was not an ounce of Conservatism in Lord Randolph's composition, and he was a Tory only because he disliked the middle class. His party applauded and admired his attacks upon Liberal principles and Liberal politicians. When he set himself to remove from Toryism the reproach of extravagance by measures of mere thrift, he found out that Conservatism does not change, and that in Conservative circles the reformer is always a nuisance.

The effect of his resignation upon the Prime

[1] *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, vol. ii. p. 239.

Minister was prodigious. Mr. Gladstone would have chosen the most eligible successor from the ranks of his own party, written to the Queen, eaten his dinner, and slept like a top. Lord Salisbury collapsed, and implored Lord Hartington to return from Rome. Lord Hartington, accustomed to a very different sort of Premier, took his time, and then regretted that he could be of no use. He did not want to be Prime Minister, or anything else, and he probably thought Lord Salisbury the victim of a rather undignified panic. There was always, however, Mr. Goschen, who had not sat in a Liberal Cabinet since 1874. Lord Randolph afterwards admitted that he had forgotten Mr. Goschen. He had relied upon the weakness of his Chief, and upon the Conservative dislike of a Coalition, which was at that time undoubtedly strong. Forgetting the French proverb, he thought himself a necessary man. Mr. Goschen had refused to join Mr. Gladstone in 1880 because he conscientiously disapproved of enlarging the County Franchise, and he had since become so intensely Conservative that to the Government he would be rather a curb than a spur. He was not at the time in the House of Commons, and his attempt to find a seat at Liverpool failed. But a harbour of refuge was provided for him in St. George's, Hanover Square, and he took his seat on the 10th of February 1887. As Leader of the House the Conservatives insisted on having a man of their own, and Mr. Smith was made First Lord of the Treasury for the purpose.[1] Mr. Smith's speeches were intelligible to careful listeners who understood the subject, and he knew how to arrange the business of the House. But as

1886.

Mr. Goschen's appointment.

Mr. Smith's leadership.

[1] Mr. Stanhope became Secretary for War, and Sir Henry Holland, afterwards Lord Knutsford, Colonial Secretary. Sir Henry was a singular instance of a civil servant becoming political head of his old office.

1886. chief of a great party in a historic Assembly he left something to be desired. Lord Salisbury seized the opportunity of returning to the Foreign Office, and forgot to apprise Lord Iddesleigh of the change.

1887. Lord Iddesleigh was suffering from heart disease,

Death of Lord Iddesleigh. Jan. 12. and the shock of seeing his office coolly appropriated in print was too much for him. He died suddenly in these painful circumstances at the official residence of the Prime Minister, who was about to receive him. "In gentleness, temper, sacrifice of himself to the common purpose of his friends, knowledge, quickness of perception, general integrity of intention, freedom from personal aims, he was admirable." So wrote Mr. Gladstone, who knew him all his life. He lacked authority, self-assertion, and the power of making himself disagreeable. He could not put his foot down. But no public man of his time inspired more personal affection, and it was well remarked that if he had said anything against himself, his word would not have been believed.

On the very day that Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation was announced Mr. Chamberlain made at Birmingham a speech which was construed as an overture to his old political allies. Why, he asked with good sense and good temper, should British reforms be postponed while men who agreed on everything else fought each other on the Irish question? Sir William Harcourt, who appreciated better than his chief the value of Mr. Chamberlain's support, at once wrote to propose a friendly meeting. Three weeks afterwards Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan, the seceding members of the late Cabinet, met Lord Herschell and Mr. Morley round a table at Sir William Harcourt's house. For some time everything went smoothly, and outside the Conference Mr. Chamberlain spoke strongly in favour of Home Rule. There

The Round Table. Jan. 14.

Jan. 29.

must be, he acknowledged, a legislative authority in Dublin. As for the executive, he should recommend something simple and cheap. But if the Irish leaders preferred an elaborate copy of Downing Street and Whitehall, that was their own affair. There seemed to be very little space left to cover, when suddenly Mr. Chamberlain broke off the negotiations. English Radicals, as well as Irish Nationalists, had made reflections upon his proceedings alike untimely and unfair. He retorted in a fierce letter to a newspaper called the *Baptist*, nominally arguing for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales, but really attacking Liberals as associates of three million "disloyal" Irishmen who would not permit anything to be done for any other part of the United Kingdom. This fiery onslaught interrupted the parleys, and they were never resumed. They were not wholly fruitless. For while Mr. Chamberlain resumed his support of the Unionist Government, and his hostility to Home Rule, Sir George Trevelyan soon afterwards returned to the Liberal party, and found a seat in the House of Commons as one of the Members for Glasgow. By that time, however, the Irish question had undergone several new developments.

1887. Failure of the Conference.

When Parliament met in 1887, the Queen's Speech announced that organised attempts against the fulfilment of legal obligations in Ireland had made it necessary to propose a reform of criminal jurisprudence. The attempt to govern Ireland by the ordinary law, without concession or restriction, had failed. This challenge was taken up by Mr. Parnell in the form of an amendment to the Address. But the Liberal Unionists supported the Government, and this division finally committed them to the policy of coercion as the alternative of Home Rule. There was, however, a preliminary step to be taken, and the new Leader of the House,

Jan. 27. The return to coercion. Feb. 11.

1887. Mr. Smith, proposed a stricter form of closure. The initiative of the Speaker had been futile, and it was therefore provided, after long discussion, that debate might be closed at any time on the motion of any Member with the consent of the Chair if there were at least two hundred votes in the majority. Mr. Gladstone unaccountably persuaded himself that the new Standing Order would destroy the impartiality of the Speaker. In ordinary minds it seemed to have the contrary effect, and to protect the Speaker from the invidious duty of taking spontaneous action himself. Armed with this formidable weapon, the Government felt equal to proposing the most drastic measures. In the case of Mr. Dillon and five other Nationalists who had been put upon their trial for applying the Plan of Campaign to Lord Clanricarde's estate, the jury disagreed, as they probably would have done in England. For, illegal as the Plan of Campaign was, there could be no denying the existence of the hardships which it sought to cure. The Under-Secretary for Ireland, Sir Redvers Buller, told Lord Cowper's Commission that the National League had been the best, if not the only, friend of the Irish tenants. "You have got," he said, "a very ignorant poor people, and the law should look after them, instead of which it has only looked after the rich." This was the straightforward language of an Englishman, a soldier, and a landlord. He had discovered in County Kerry that evictions were rigidly carried out where the tenants were quite unable to pay. Lord Cowper's Commission, in their Report, recommended that the term of judicial rents should be lowered from fifteen years to five, that those already fixed should be revised, and that leaseholders should be brought under the Act of 1881. There was not a stauncher Unionist in England than Lord Cowper. But he was also

Stricter closure. March 18.

Feb. 24.

Jan. 29.

Lord Cowper's Report.

the owner of large estates, and knew how persons of his own class ought to behave. This Report made it necessary for the Government to introduce a Land Bill along with their Coercion Bill. But before they could bring in either one or the other, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach resigned the office of Chief Secretary. His eyesight was temporarily impaired, and it had for some time been obvious that he was unequal to the weight of his laborious department. His successor was the Prime Minister's nephew, Mr. Arthur Balfour, who had already as Secretary for Scotland been admitted to the Cabinet.

1887.

March 7. Resignation of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach.

Mr. Balfour's appointment.

Mr. Balfour's first business was to bring in a Coercion Bill of the most stringent kind. It did not suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, or legalise the imprisonment of suspected persons without a trial. But it did provide for the trial in England of murders and other serious crimes committed in Ireland. It enabled the Lord-Lieutenant to declare an Association unlawful if he thought it dangerous. Thirdly, and this was the most serious innovation proposed, it gave the Resident Magistrates, many of whom were not lawyers, jurisdiction to try cases of conspiracy, for which in England and Scotland juries were required. Hitherto every Coercion Bill had been limited in time. Mr. Balfour's Bill was permanent, to be brought out, or left in abeyance, as the Lord-Lieutenant might please. For it was only to districts proclaimed by him that these drastic clauses applied. So far as crime and outrage were concerned, the case for the Bill was a singularly weak one. Nor was it strengthened by the lame and halting manner in which the Chief Secretary laid it before Parliament. On the other hand, the success of the Plan of Campaign, which was an open defiance of the law, and the impossibility of getting an Irish jury

March 28. The Permanent Coercion Bill.

1887. to convict the Campaigners, were arguments less easy to meet than the official statistics. Every Coercion Bill hitherto passed had been supported both by Liberals and by Conservatives. Against this Bill Mr. Gladstone led the whole of the Opposition into the Lobby. He was able to say that his prophecy had been fulfilled, and that the alternative to Home Rule was criminal legislation for Ireland alone. The utmost ingenuity could hardly reconcile this Bill with the cardinal principle of Unionism. Similar Bills in the past had been for a fixed period of years, or months, and it could always be said, even if it were not always believed, that the same disorder would lead to the same legislation in any other part of the United Kingdom. It was now proposed to make a general and permanent separation between the criminal law of Great Britain and the criminal law of Ireland. No Plan of Campaign, no ephemeral manifestation of discontent, could justify such a policy, which could only be founded on some fundamental difference between British and Irish character. Had Irishmen, as Mr. Gladstone ironically suggested, in one of the debates on Home Rule, swallowed a double dose of original sin? So far as finality can be attributed to anything human, this seemed a final measure. For whatever a future House of Commons might do, it was almost impossible to imagine a Coercion Bill repealed by the House of Lords. Nevertheless the Liberal Unionists in Parliament voted steadily with Ministers, and defended their own conduct by referring to Mr. Gladstone's alliance with the Parnellites. "At least," said Mr. Chamberlain, "our allies are English gentlemen, not the subsidised agents of a foreign conspiracy," who received subscriptions for political objects from their own countrymen in the United States. The Bill encountered strenuous resistance, and was

only forced through its first reading by the closure. 1887.
So far as outward indications went, it was not April 1.
popular with the masses, and a meeting to protest
against it in Hyde Park attracted a hundred thou- April 11.
sand persons. Many Liberals who had voted for
Conservative candidates at the General Election
because they disliked Mr. Gladstone's Bills had
persuaded themselves that there was a half-way
house between dragooning the Nationalists and
surrendering to them. On the other hand, there
were a large number of educated people who would
have supported martial law for Ireland, and thought
the Government Bill too weak for the occasion.
Feeling ran very high, and disturbed social inter-
course, as Home Rule had disturbed it the previous
year. The *Times*, in a series of articles, en-
deavoured to show that the Irish Nationalists were
criminals of the most nefarious type.

Little interest was taken in these articles. The
subject was not new, and Mr. Forster had really
exhausted it in the House of Commons five years
before. The debate on the second reading of the
Coercion Bill proceeded, and the division had been "
fixed by consent for the 18th of April. On the The forged
morning of that day the *Times* published what letter.
purported to be the facsimile of a letter dictated
and signed by Mr. Parnell on the 15th of May
1882, nine days after the murders in the Phœnix
Park. Only the signature, and the previous
words "Yours very truly," were alleged to be in
Mr. Parnell's own hand, and if they were not, they
were a clever imitation. It did not appear to
whom the letter was addressed, and the opening
salutation was "Dear Sir." The *Times* expressed
a belief that the recipient was Patrick Egan, a
former secretary of the Land League. That,
however, was not a very important point. The
substance of the document was an apology for

1887. denouncing the murders as "the only course open to us," and an admission that "Burke got no more than his deserts." It was suggested that Parnell wrote this strange note from fear of assassination. But in any case it would, if genuine, have entirely destroyed his character for manliness and veracity, besides connecting him closely with men who had justly perished on the scaffold. The sensation was tremendous. For to most Englishmen of the educated class it seemed incredible that the first newspaper in the world would print such a letter without ample proof of its authenticity. The idea that it was intended to affect votes in the House of Commons seemed wild and foolish, since no Government was ever more clearly certain to have a substantial majority. Few men took the thing so calmly as Parnell himself. He did not read the *Times*, and when he came down to the House of Commons that Monday afternoon, he had not seen the letter. One of his followers showed it him, and he read it carefully. Then he said, "I have not made an 'S' like that since 1878."[1] He did not find an opportunity of speaking in the House till after midnight, and in his speech he made the mistake of coldly criticising the form of the signature, and the nature of the sentiments attributed to him. He did, however, stigmatise it as a "villainous and bare-faced forgery." He did say, in plain language, "I never heard of the letter, never directed such a letter to be written, and never saw such a letter before I saw it in the *Times*." "Politics," he concluded, "have come to a pretty pass in this country when the leader of a party of eighty-six Members has to stand up at ten minutes past one in the House of Commons in order to defend himself from an anonymous fabrication such as that which is contained in the *Times* of this morning." Politics

Parnell's denial.

[1] O'Brien's *Life of Parnell*, vol. ii. p. 199.

had come to a very ugly pass, for he was not believed. The majority for the second reading of the Bill was a hundred, and the *Times* refused to apologise or to withdraw. 1887.

At this point Mr. Parnell, acting under advice, played into the hands of his enemies. His proper course was clear. He should at once have served the solicitor for the *Times* with a writ. As a general rule, the less a public man has to do with actions of libel, the better. He is a fair object of criticism. If he is attacked by his opponents, he is supported by his friends, and if he cannot stand abuse, he is unfit for political life. But this was a case altogether out of the ordinary run. There could be no question of fair comment. The charge was a definite matter of fact, either true or false. The burden of proof would lie upon the defendants, and they would have to show affirmatively beyond reasonable doubt that Parnell wrote the letter. Although judges and juries have their prejudices and predilections like other people, they would not convict a man without evidence, merely because they disliked Home Rule. Parnell, however, took no further step, and thereby made a great many people assume his guilt. The Prime Minister did not wait for any such gradual process of negative inference. Within forty-eight hours of Mr. Parnell's public denial in the House of Commons, he addressed a meeting of the Primrose League at Battersea, and took the authenticity of the letter for granted. He did not even stop at Parnell. "You may go back," he told these dames and knights, "to the beginning of British Government, you may go back from decade to decade, and from leader to leader, but you will never find a man who has accepted a position, in reference to an ally tainted with the strong presumption of conniving at assassination, which has been accepted by

His inaction.

Rashness of Lord Salisbury.

1887. Mr. Gladstone at the present time."[1] The language was unusually awkward and tortuous. But Lord Salisbury certainly meant to insinuate that Mr. Parnell connived at murders, and that Mr. Gladstone did not shrink from him on that account. The same thing had been said of Palmerston, Stansfeld, and Mazzini. Lord Salisbury's memory was sometimes short.

When the Crimes Bill got into Committee, even the new form of closure was found inadequate to the necessities of the Government. They dropped the clause for trying Irishmen in London. Otherwise they stuck to their Bill, and applied to it what was henceforth known as the guillotine. Taking a hint from the "emergency rules" of Speaker Brand, they proposed on the 10th of June that, if the Committee had not finished their labours within a week, the remaining clauses should be put forthwith from the Chair without amendment or debate. It was the irony of circumstance that this enormous revolution in Parliamentary procedure should be made by Mr. Smith, who seemed to personify everything that was respectable, commonplace, and humdrum. Five years ago most Conservatives looked with horror, and many Liberals with misgiving, upon the most carefully guarded machinery for closing, at the suggestion of the Speaker, a palpably exhausted debate. On this 10th of June only ninety-three Members, including Irishmen, voted against a motion which made it impossible even to discuss a number of large changes in the Criminal Law. Whether this altered temper were laudable or lamentable, there could be no doubt to whom it was due. The Irish Nationalists, like Samson at Gaza, had pulled down the temple of Parliamentary freedom on their opponents, and on themselves. If they could not prevent the Crimes

The guillotine.

[1] *Times*, 21st April 1887.

Bill from being passed, they could ensure that it should be passed by a Conservative Government at the cost of a gigantic innovation. Politicians, however, live from hand to mouth, and from day to day. When Mr. Courtney rose at ten o'clock to put the question that Clause Six stand part of the Bill, there was triumphant cheering from the benches on his right. The Ministerialists had indeed good reason to be proud of their Chief Secretary. Although Mr. Balfour began badly, and almost broke down when he introduced the Bill, he developed in Committee not indeed a further knowledge of Ireland, or a disposition to acquire it, but a dialectical dexterity, a rapid cut and thrust in debate which always delights the House of Commons. Nevertheless he could not get on with the ordinary rules. The stage of Report, which follows Committee, had to be curtailed by the same mechanical process as Committee itself, and not till the month of July did the Bill reach the House of Lords. An impartial Chamber of Review would have carefully scrutinised, and judiciously amended, those parts of the Bill which had not been considered by the House of Commons. The Lords hurried the Bill through in a few hours, exactly as it came up to them, without the change of a word.

1887. June 30.

Very different was the spirit in which they dealt with Lord Cadogan's Land Bill. This measure, which purported to carry out the recommendations of Lord Cowper and his colleagues, was introduced almost simultaneously with the Crimes Bill. In its original shape it opened the Land Court to leaseholders without authorising the revision of judicial rents on account of the fall in prices, as the Commission had recommended. On the Commission sat Sir James Caird, an eminent agriculturist, who declared a year before that all economic rent in Ireland had ceased, meaning that the

The Land Bill of 1887. March 31.

1887. tenant paid interest on his own improvements, instead of receiving it. The Bill was regarded even by Lord Cowper as inadequate and unsatisfactory. But both the Prime Minister and the
March 22. Chief Secretary had committed themselves to the inviolable sanctity of judicial rents. Mr. Balfour told the House of Commons that to interfere with them would be folly and madness. A month later Lord Salisbury said in the House of Lords that to touch these rents would be "laying your axe at the root of the fabric of civilised society." No language could be more definite and explicit. But when Benedick said that he should die a bachelor, he did not think that he should live to be married. Ministers had forgotten in office, loudly as they had asserted in Opposition, that there was a part of Ireland called Ulster. The Ulster farmer, even when he hated Home Rule, loved tenant right. His attachment to the soil was not less strong than the fervour of his Protestantism. "Gentlemen," said John Mitchel to an Ulster audience who had raised anti-Papal cries, "I am a Protestant like yourselves, and I care no more for the Pope than you. But there is one thing his Holiness cannot do; he cannot issue a writ of ejectment in the county of Antrim." It was against these writs of ejectment, which had been issued quite as freely in Protestant Ulster as in the Catholic parts of Ireland, that Ulstermen were protesting in 1887. The Government, with a steady majority always behind them in both Houses, vacillated, swaying from one side to the other. Finally they came
Revision of judicial rents. down on the side of the tenant. For if, said Lord Salisbury, he did not allow the judicial rents to be revised, if he did not put his axe to the root of civilised society, Ulster would be lost to the Unionist cause, and then what friends would Government have in Ireland? So a general power of revising,

that is of cutting down, judicial rents for three years was given to the Land Commissioners. It might have been thought that the fabric of civilised society was more important than the Unionist cause. But there were a good many votes in the cause, and there were none in the fabric. Lord Salisbury's "twenty years of resolute government" had broken down conspicuously in twelve months, and Mr. Parnell's rejected Bill of 1886 had become in 1887, with the reluctant assent of the Lords, a statute of the realm. The Land Act of that year descended as directly and immediately from the Plan of Campaign as did the Land Act of 1881 from the operations of the Land League. 1887.

The Session of 1887, the longest which had yet been known, lasted from the 27th of January to the 16th of September, and was chiefly occupied with Irish affairs. Mr. Goschen's first Budget, however, provoked much controversy, the more so from the contrast it afforded to Lord Randolph Churchill's reasons for resignation. Lord Randolph, with a wisdom beyond his years, had declined to take responsibility for estimates which he considered excessive. Mr. Goschen, who was old enough to be his father, manufactured an artificial surplus by taking two millions from the Sinking Fund, which Sir Stafford Northcote had fixed at twenty-eight millions. To diminish the payment of debt in time of peace is a grave financial offence, which there was nothing on this occasion to excuse. But as the Chancellor of the Exchequer reduced the Income Tax from eightpence to sevenpence, and the tobacco duty by twopence in the pound, he was only criticised by financiers, who bore the public as much as they protect them. The separation of local loans from the main body of the debt, first effected at this time, has proved useful and convenient to the critics of municipal extravagance. The Mer- Mr. Goschen's first Budget.

1887. chandise Marks Act, aimed at the sale of foreign, especially German, as native goods, did not altogether fulfil the expectations of those who urged it upon the Government. It is right, of course, that people should know what they are buying, though the place of origin is less important than the merits of the article sold. But as there are many persons inclined by nature, and many more compelled by circumstance, to look at both sides of every sixpence they spend, a printed declaration that the cheapest goods were made abroad proved more efficacious as an advertisement for the foreign manufacturer than as a barrier against his competition.

Merchandise Marks Act.

The Allotments Act.

An Allotments Bill had been promised, along with many other measures, in the Queen's Speech, but nothing more had been heard of it when, on the first of July, the Liberals won a seat in Lincolnshire by appealing to the half-forgotten principle of three acres and a cow. This is the sort of practical argument which all Governments understand, and within six weeks an Allotments Bill had been read the second time. It was not, however, a workmanlike measure, bristling, as it did, with obstacles which rendered it futile. First, there was to be a requisition signed by six memorialists, who probably could not write. Then there was the local authority, not representative, to whom the memorial must be sent in. If this process did not produce available land, the next step was to approach the Quarter Sessions, entirely composed of landowners, and invite them to make a provisional order empowering the local authority to promote a Bill in Parliament for the compulsory sale of allotment land. A less feasible method of carrying out social reform could hardly be found, even on the pages of the Statute Book.

It was while the Government were engaged in

a desperate conflict with Irish Nationalism at Westminster that Queen Victoria celebrated, a few yards from the scene of the Parliamentary struggle, the Jubilee of her illustrious reign. An auspicious prelude to the great ceremony in the Abbey was the Colonial Conference summoned by Mr. Stanhope for an earlier day of the year. This Conference met at the Foreign Office on the 4th of April, and was received by the Queen at Windsor on the 4th of May. The delegates, statesmen of high repute in their respective Colonies, represented a population of nine millions, and an area of seven million square miles, united by the golden link of the Crown. Although Sir Henry Holland had become Colonial Secretary before they arrived, he had not signed the invitations, and the name of Edward Stanhope will always be connected with this conspicuous symbol of imperial union. The Prime Minister, being also Foreign Secretary, gave them at the Foreign Office a welcome not less cautious than cordial. "All ambitious schemes of constitution-making" he set aside as undesirable, perhaps with a reminiscence of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill. Federation, which Lord Rosebery, not then in office, warmly espoused, Lord Salisbury coldly defined as "nebulous matter which in the course of ages would settle down into material and practical results." On one point, however, he had a definite suggestion to make. It was not, he said, a Zollverein, but a Kriegsverein, a union for war, and not for trade, which the needs of the time required. If imperial connection meant anything, it should mean a policy of imperial defence. The one tangible result of the Conference, though its sentimental value is not to be despised, was an increase of the Australasian squadron for the protection of the shipping interest, coupled with a promise by the Australasian Govern-

1887.

The Queen's Jubilee.

The first Colonial Conference.

Imperial defence.

1887. ments to pay for the maintenance of the cruisers.[1] The Council of the Imperial Institute was at the same time composed, with the Prince of Wales's approval, to represent the British Islands, the Indian Empire, and Her Majesty's Colonial possessions. It was on the longest day of the year that the Queen went in procession to Westminster Abbey, and celebrated by a solemn service the completion of half a century's reign. Since the early summer morning of 1837, when she was roused from her sleep at Kensington Palace to be told of her accession to the Throne, the Queen had passed through many vicissitudes, none of which seemed to affect her in comparison with her husband's early death. It was not for many years that she became really popular. The nation knew little of her, and she appeared unable to recover from her bereavement. Gradually her subjects came to understand that it was pleasure, not duty, she had abandoned, and that no public task was ever, for a single day, left unfulfilled. This quiet devotion to a high purpose had been accompanied by constant sympathy with national feeling, and by impartial recognition of political service. As Her Majesty drove down Parliament Street on that perfect June morning, she seemed in her dignified simplicity a type and symbol of the great Empire which had almost grown from infancy under her sway. Every part of it, except Ireland, was contented with her rule, and the Princes of India were the most brilliant group in the walls of the Abbey Church. A conspicuous figure in the procession was the Crown Prince of Germany, Her Majesty's son-in-law, a brilliant soldier, but an ardent lover of peace, already threatened by the fell disease which cut short soon after his accession a reign of high promise for mankind. After the Jubilee the Queen laid

The Queen's career.

[1] The annual charge was estimated at £126,000.

the foundation stone of the Imperial Institute at South Kensington, and attended in her yacht a naval review at Spithead, the like of which had never been seen in the world. The Queen's Jubilee was a brief truce to the strife of parties, which it interrupted without abating. Those Irish Nationalists who had seats in the House of Commons held aloof from the general festivity. Their motives are intelligible enough. The effect upon English opinion was bad; but of English opinion they always thought too little, even from their own point of view. 1887. July 4. July 23.

Mr. Balfour's administration of the Crimes Act was steady, courageous, and determined. His task was indeed far easier than Lord Spencer's, for he had not to deal with murderous conspiracy and organised assassination. On the other hand, he was undoubtedly confronted with systematic resistance to the law by the National League through the Plan of Campaign, and this movement he set himself resolutely to defeat. His principal antagonist was not Mr. Parnell, but Mr. William O'Brien. Mr. O'Brien did not confine his efforts to Ireland itself. He took the extraordinary course of visiting Canada for the purpose of appealing to Irish residents in the Dominion against the Governor-General, the Marquess of Lansdowne. Lord Lansdowne was the owner of a large estate in County Kerry, and through his agent was evicting tenants for not paying their rents. But Mr. O'Brien's conduct was neither judicious nor successful. For Lord Lansdowne could not be accused of anything worse than insistence upon his legal rights, and in Canada he was neither a landowner nor a politician, but simply the representative of the Queen, to whom Mr. O'Brien had more than once taken an oath of allegiance. When Mr. O'Brien paid his indirect and unintentional tribute

Mr. Balfour in Ireland.

Mr. O'Brien in Canada.

1887. to the unity of the Empire, he ignored the fact that there were Irishmen of all sorts in Canada, Protestants as well as Catholics, not merely Nationalists, but Orangemen too. The Canadian
May 17. Government wisely left him alone. But at Toronto he was refused a hearing, and hooted through the streets, while the Viceroy received such an ovation as he had never known before. At Hamilton, Ontario, shots were fired at the emissary of the National League, and it was not until he crossed the frontier of the United States that he received an enthusiastic welcome from the Irishmen of
May 29. Boston, Massachusetts. On returning to Ireland, however, a few days before the Jubilee, Mr. O'Brien was greeted as a hero, and presented with
June 17. the freedom of the city by the Municipality of Cork.

Before the Crimes Bill became law Mr. Gladstone made in South Wales a conciliatory speech,
June 4. in the hope of bringing over to his side those Liberal opponents of his Irish policy who disapproved on constitutional grounds of leaving
Gladstone's offer. Ireland without representation in Parliament. He suggested that in any future scheme a term of years might be fixed, during which the Irish Members should remain as they were, and that at the end of the period the question should be again considered. This offer reconciled Sir George Trevelyan, who had already been estranged from his new allies by their acquiescence in "coercion for ever." It was the last thing to satisfy Mr. Bright, and neither Lord Hartington nor Mr. Chamberlain was affected by it in any degree. On one point, however, and not an unimportant point, these two statesmen disagreed. Parliament was still sitting when Mr. Balfour in the name of Lord
Aug. 19. Proclamation of the League. Londonderry proclaimed the League as a dangerous association which incited to violence, and prevented

the law from being carried out. This proclamation had not of itself any legal effect. But it enabled the Lord-Lieutenant to suppress such branches of the League as he might in future consider mischievous, and it was at once challenged by the Opposition in the House of Commons. Mr. Gladstone himself moved the withdrawal of the notice, and was supported in debate by Sir George Trevelyan, who had just re-entered the House of Commons. The Government had a large majority,[1] and received the active assistance of Lord Hartington. The Liberal Unionists, however, were not on this occasion unanimous, for in the Aye Lobby with Mr. Gladstone were Mr. Chamberlain and his little handful of immediate followers from Birmingham. In carrying out the policy of coercion Mr. Balfour never flinched. His method was simple. It was impossible for him to live in Ireland while Parliament was sitting, and he was not fond of living in Ireland at all. He enjoined upon the Civil Service in Dublin, the Resident Magistrates, and the Royal Irish Constabulary, the duty and necessity of executing the law in all circumstances and at all costs with such force as might be essential for the purpose. He let it be known that slackness was in his eyes the unpardonable sin, and that there would be a good deal of indulgence for excess of zeal. He had a just confidence in his own power to defend all those in authority under him when their proceedings were attacked in the House of Commons. On Lord Londonderry, his nominal superior, he could count as an hereditary Unionist. But the Under-Secretary for Ireland is a personage scarcely less important than the Lord-Lieutenant himself, and Sir Redvers Buller had incurred the displeasure of the landlords by his evidence before

1887.

Removal of Sir Redvers Buller.

[1] Seventy-eight.

1887. Lord Cowper's Commission. He was recalled to his military duties in England, and his place was taken by Sir West Ridgeway, whose services on the Afghan frontier had earned conspicuous recognition. Between him and the Chief Secretary mutual confidence was soon established, and never impaired.

The affray at Mitchelstown.

Early in the month of September an encounter between the police and the people tested Mr. Balfour's principles and practice. Mr. O'Brien had been summoned to attend the petty sessions at Mitchelstown on a charge of taking part in the Plan of Campaign. He did not attend, and a

Sept. 9.

warrant was issued for his apprehension. The same afternoon, but not until the Court had adjourned, a public meeting of several thousand persons was held in front of the Court-house. Two English Members of Parliament were present, and several English ladies. This assembly was not at the time alleged to be illegal, nor was any attempt made to suppress it. But the police sent a reporter, whom they endeavoured to push through the crowd while Mr. Dillon was speaking from a car. The people resented this intrusion, and drove the police back with sticks. The constables retreated to their barracks, from which they fired, killing one man on the spot, and mortally wounding two others, both of whom died within a week. In any other part of the United Kingdom, or in any British Colony, this would have been regarded as a very serious matter indeed. If the Irish Government wished to have an official report of the speeches delivered by Mr. Dillon and others, their proper course was the usual one of applying to the conveners for accommodation. Their shorthand writer had no special privilege not enjoyed by the rest of the public, and to thrust him into the front by force was an unlawful, as well as a foolish, act.

The shooting of the three men was on the face of it murder, though the constables who fired the shots might, if they had been put upon their trial, have proved that they had acted in self-protection, or, as was said, and denied, in defence of a wounded comrade. Everything that happened after the failure of the police was the subject of dispute, and demanded the most rigid investigation. But no proper inquiry was ever held. Three days after the event Mr. Balfour told the House of Commons in the most positive and dogmatic manner that those who called the meeting were responsible, and that the police were blameless. From that position, for which he could not have had sufficient facts, he never receded. No wonder that Mr. Gladstone asked the Liberal party to "remember Mitchelstown." The coroner's jury, after sitting more than a fortnight, found a verdict of wilful murder against the County Inspector and five constables. Five months afterwards the High Court in Dublin quashed the verdict on technical grounds of irregular procedure. The substantial question of murder, manslaughter, or justifiable homicide, was never decided at all. Meanwhile the proclamation of the Lord-Lieutenant had been followed up by suppressing two hundred branches of the League in the six counties of Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Clare, Wexford, and Galway. In these counties it thus became illegal either to hold or to report a meeting of the League. Reports, however, were published, even, it was suspected, of meetings not actually held, in a newspaper called the *Nation*, of which Mr. Timothy Sullivan, then Lord Mayor of Dublin, was proprietor. The Lord Mayor was accordingly prosecuted, and attended at the Dublin Police Court in his robes of office, with the High Sheriff, the Corporation, and the Mace. The stipendiary magistrate, Mr. O'Donel, acting

1887.

Oct. 12.

Feb. 10, 1888.

"

Sept. 20.

Prosecution of the Lord Mayor.

1887. under compulsion from a higher tribunal, committed the Lord Mayor to prison, but expressly ordered that he should be treated as a political prisoner, or, in the technical language of the law, as a first-class misdemeanant. Very different was the fate of Mr. O'Brien, convicted at the same time by Resident Magistrates on a similar charge. He was deprived of his ordinary clothes, and subjected to the same indignities as if he had been a thief. Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, an English gentleman of high literary distinction, who held a meeting of the Home Rule League on Lord Clanricarde's estate at Woodford, and resisted the efforts of the police
Oct. 23. to disperse it, was also imprisoned like a criminal of the ordinary type. Mr. Balfour's policy was to carry out the law without respect of persons, and without entering into the merits of particular cases. He was the first Chief Secretary since 1880 against whom the landlords had no complaint to make. Whatever they might think of the Land Act, they had nothing to say against the administration of the Crimes Act, or the handling of the police. There were no more attempts at "pressure within the law." The forces of the Executive were at the disposal of every owner who wished by legal means to get rid of his tenants. A horrible agrarian murder in Clare showed that lawless violence was still rife. But the perpetrators were brought to justice, and Mr. Balfour was hailed by many admirers as the strong man who would reconquer Ireland. His marked rise in public estimation was
Mr. Balfour and Mr. Gladstone. accompanied by a corresponding decline in the authority of Mr. Gladstone. While Mr. Gladstone could still excite as much popular enthusiasm as ever, and his oratorical power was unabated, he became so much and so exclusively absorbed in the Irish question that he seemed no longer to appreciate the relative significance of things. In

the case of Mitchelstown the facts were on his side, and his arguments were sound. In other cases he was less fortunate, and he sometimes lost his bearings in purely legal disputes. He believed almost any story against the Irish Government, and would scarcely listen to the Ministerial defence. Instead of keeping on the heights of the great issue which no Coercion Acts could settle, and urging on broad grounds of justice the claims of the Irish people to self-government, he took up small personal complaints which were often unfounded, and at no time worthy of so illustrious an advocate. By this lack of proportion he lost ground with quiet and reflective minds not indisposed to regard Home Rule as a feasible solution of the Irish problem, but unprepared to consider Ireland as the victim of despotic tyranny. 1887.

That Mr. Gladstone's political colour-blindness was confined to Ireland a metropolitan incident proved. Depression of trade had thrown many men out of work in London, and they had adopted as a convenient meeting-place Trafalgar Square. The Home Secretary[1] considered that the Square was ill adapted for such purposes, and ought to be kept clear for the general public. He accordingly instructed Sir Charles Warren, the Commissioner of Police, to prevent any further meetings there. Mr. Matthews, in taking this line, was within the law. Trafalgar Square is the property of the Crown, administered by the First Commissioner of Works, and the Government can prohibit any use of it which interferes with the thoroughfare. But a Government that exhausted the powers of the Crown would not get much popular support, and this particular prerogative would have been more judiciously kept in the background. A Home Secretary who is a lawyer may be a most valuable

[1] Mr. Matthews.

1887. member of the Cabinet. A lawyer who is Home Secretary does not always prove equally advantageous. The Radical and Socialist Clubs of London resolved to defy Mr. Matthews. They requested their members to attend a monster meeting in Trafalgar Square on Sunday the 13th of November. The Home Secretary stood firm, and London was confronted with the most serious danger to public peace which had menaced it since the Chartist rising of 1848.[1] All organised processions were forbidden by Sir Charles Warren to approach the Square. Nevertheless, or rather all the more, a number of such processions, with music and banners, marched from various quarters towards Charing Cross, encountering the police by the way. Trafalgar Square itself was surrounded by two thousand policemen, standing four deep. These men succeeded in repulsing all attacks made upon them. But the struggle was still going on, and ultimate victory was beginning to seem doubtful, when a police magistrate, Mr. Marsham, appeared on horseback at half-past four, followed by two squadrons of Life Guards. Behind them were Grenadiers with fixed bayonets and ball cartridge. The cavalry, however, broke up the crowd, and by seven o'clock all serious resistance to authority had ceased. Mr. Gladstone was requested to assist in the promotion of a further meeting. But he promptly declined to do anything of the sort. "It appears to me indisputable," he wrote, "that until a decision can be had, it is the duty of every citizen to refrain from all resistance to the authority of the Executive Government, which is clearly entitled to administer the laws according to what it may be advised is their true construction." How sound this advice was appeared in a very short time. The two chief rioters, Mr. John Burns, Socialist,

Rioting in Trafalgar Square.

[1] See vol. i. pp. 110-113.

and an eccentric Member of Parliament, were tried at the Central Criminal Court. The Judge[1] ruled that there was no right of meeting in the Square, the jury convicted the defendants, and they were sent to prison for six weeks. Apart from the law, there was a good deal to be said on both sides of the question whether Mr. Matthews had been discreet. But there was no analogy with Mitchelstown, where the meeting was unquestionably legal, and the verdict of the coroner's jury was contemptuously ignored.

1887. Jan. 18, 1888.

Although the subject of Trafalgar Square was raised in the House of Commons by Sir Charles Russell, the Government maintained their position and stood firm. The case against them was indeed a weak one. In England there is no written Constitution, and no positive right of public meeting. But neither a policeman nor a Secretary of State has the right to interfere with any number of peaceful citizens assembled for a lawful object. Most meetings are held in halls hired for the purpose, or on land lent by the owner, and about them no question arises. Meetings in the London parks have since 1872 been regulated by statutory rules, which imply a legal right. To meet in a public thoroughfare is obviously unlawful because it interferes with the proper use of the road or street. Trafalgar Square was the property of the Crown, subject to a right of way. The Government had therefore absolute power to prohibit meetings there, and were bound to prohibit them if they stopped the traffic. The traffic on Sunday, however, was light, and Mr. Matthews, who had more legal knowledge than political tact, fell back upon the plea that the particular meeting called for the 13th of November was the ground of reasonable apprehension to the residents in the neigh-

March 1, 1888.

The right of meeting.

[1] Mr. Justice Charles.

1887. bourhood. It was only the accident that Trafalgar Square lies at the heart of the British Empire which gave the events of that Sunday afternoon so much factitious importance. If the promoters had chosen to walk half a mile further, and meet in Hyde Park, they could have made their speeches, and passed their resolutions, without let or hindrance.

On all points connected with Ireland the Government could rely upon the steady, unswerving support of the Liberal Unionists. The annual meeting of Conservative Associations, held this year at Oxford on the 21st of November, raised an issue which, if it had been taken up by the Conservative Leaders, would have dissolved the alliance altogether. This representative body, known in political slang as a Caucus, resolved by a thousand votes against a trifling number of dissentients that "the continued depression in trade and agriculture, the increase in the scarcity of employment, and the consequent distress among all classes, render speedy reform in the policy of the United Kingdom as regards foreign imports and the influx of indigent foreigners a matter of vital necessity to the people of Great Britain and Ireland." This meant Protection, or nothing, and against Protection Lord Hartington, to say nothing of Mr. Bright, would have fought as staunchly as he fought against Home Rule. Lord Salisbury, however, who addressed the Conference at the close of its sittings, put the question by, and talked of other things. So the matter was shelved for the time, and its significance seriously underrated. The delegates at a Caucus are sometimes mere busybodies, who push themselves into notoriety by their own conceit. But in this case the disparity of numbers was too great to be thus explained, and when a great party is

Tariff reform.

practically unanimous in demanding revolution, or reaction, there must be in the background a considerable volume of simmering discontent. In 1887 Ireland, as Mr. Gladstone expressed it, blocked the way, and in practical politics nothing else seemed to count. Those who looked ahead, and thought of other subjects, were read or heard with indifference, if at all. Still, there was no denying either that business had long been slack, or that agriculture had long been depressed, or yet that numerous persons, supporters of the Government, were attributing their want of prosperity to unrestricted freedom of trade. The question, if it had gone beyond the sphere of the Caucus, would have disturbed the ordinary lines of party as much as Home Rule itself. All Liberals, Unionists as well as Home Rulers, were free-traders in Cobden's sense. So were some leading Conservatives, including the First Lord of the Treasury,[1] the Chancellor of the Exchequer,[2] and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. Lord Carnarvon, on the other hand, was a Protectionist. So was Mr. Parnell. If the Government had adopted the Oxford resolution, they might have gained as many votes in Ireland as they lost in England and Scotland. They did not make the experiment. They treated the Protectionist manifesto with contempt. What were the private thoughts of the delegates we cannot tell. They took no public step. They allowed the Government which they had helped to place and were helping to keep in office a full licence of disregard for their policy and views. Nevertheless it is not to be supposed that there was no fire behind the smoke. Both farmers and manufacturers protested against foreign competition. But while farmers would have liked a duty on Russian, or Indian, or American, or 1887.

[1] Mr. Smith. [2] Mr. Goschen.

1887. Canadian corn, they would have strongly objected to a tax upon the iron of which their agricultural implements were made. The ironmaster would have been very well pleased to see some check put upon the importation of his commodity from abroad. He could not for the life of him see why the general public should have to pay more for their bread in order that tenants might make more profits, or landlords receive more rents. Protection is as broad as it is long. The further it reaches, the wider it spreads, because every one expects that by a protective tariff he will be enriched at the cost of the community. The Government took the line of least resistance by doing nothing at all.

CHAPTER IV

LORD SALISBURY'S FOREIGN POLICY

THE Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary in 1887 was a Foreign Secretary first, and a Prime Minister afterwards. Lord Salisbury had been in his youth a professional journalist, and his written, like his spoken, style was excellent. On his legs, especially out of office, he alarmed his friends, and delighted his foes, by what one of the latter called his "blazing indiscretions." He seemed on those occasions to have no fear. We have seen how long his "twenty years of resolute government" lasted in Ireland. In matters of foreign policy he did not even talk of being resolute. Rash and headstrong on the platform, or in debate, he became, when he entered Downing Street, cautious to the edge of weakness, and prudent to the verge of timidity. His trumpet-note of defiance to Russia on the 1st of April 1878 was the prelude to a private arrangement with Count Schouvaloff, which gave Russia everything she really wanted. Lord Salisbury profited by the lesson, and seldom afterwards adopted the same confident tone. When he took over the Foreign Office from Lord Iddesleigh at the beginning of 1887, he found the question of Egypt lying athwart the path of British policy in Europe. Five years had almost elapsed since Lord Hartington expressed to Parliament his belief that British occupation

1887.

The question of Egypt.

1887. would be at an end in six months, and the end seemed as far off as ever. Foreigners not unnaturally suspected the sincerity of British assurances that the occupation was only for a time, especially when they saw that successive Governments said the same thing, and yet stayed where they were.

Lord Salisbury made an effort to clear the national character. Sir Drummond Wolff in Egypt, where his services were not otherwise required, was supposed to symbolise the authority of the Porte, under which diplomatic fiction Lord Salisbury, like the ostrich, hid his head. This amateur, now almost a professional, diplomatist was sent back to Constantinople for the purpose of signing a treaty with the Sultan about the future of Egypt. After less delay than is usual in Turkish affairs, he succeeded in his object, and on the 22nd of May affixed his signature to a remarkable document. England undertook to withdraw her troops from Egypt within three years, subject to the right of sending them back in case there should be danger of invasion, or disturbance, or failure to discharge international duties. This singular and most unsatisfactory compact was, as good luck would have it, never ratified. The French and Russian Ambassadors, especially the Frenchman, pointed out to the Sultan that his ratification would be an acknowledgment of England's right to be in Egypt at all. He accordingly refused, and on the 16th of July Sir Drummond Wolff left Constantinople without a treaty. England was free, but it was her enemies, not her Ministers, who had secured her freedom. Short-sighted as the Sultan might have been, he was less blind than the Government of the French Republic. French holders of Turkish bonds, however, who were numerous and influential, had

The Anglo-Turkish Convention.

Ratification refused.

good reason to rejoice at the otherwise equivocal success of their Ambassador. At the same time Lord Salisbury signed an international agreement with France which effectively neutralised the Suez Canal, opening that great highway between East and West to ships of all countries, even ships of war, with the proviso that there should be no hostile manœuvres in the Canal itself or on its banks. 1887.

Another dispute which Lord Salisbury lost no time in attempting to settle was the claim of American fishermen, citizens of the United States, to navigate the waters of Canada and Newfoundland. It was agreed that a Commission should meet at Washington consisting of Mr. Chamberlain for the United Kingdom, Mr. Bayard for the United States, and Sir Charles Tupper for Canada. So far as capacity was concerned, no better representative of the mother country could have been found. Unfortunately Mr. Chamberlain could never forget that he was a partisan, or abstain from replying to an attack. His appointment was announced on the last day of August, and some of the American newspapers at once threatened him with the opposition of the Irish vote. A diplomatist would have smiled. A politician of the old school, Whig or Tory, would have laughed. Mr. Chamberlain composed and delivered at Islington, on the eve of his departure from England, an elaborate invective against the American Irish, who abused, he said, the liberty they enjoyed in the new world to envenom the relations between the United Kingdom and the United States. After that he would, so far as the Conference was concerned, have done better to stop at home. The *New York Tribune*, the *New York Times*, the *Philadelphia Telegraph*, the *Ottawa Free Press*, and the *Toronto Globe* The American fisheries. Oct. 25.

1887. told him plainly that his errand was useless. He went, and signed a Treaty, which was sufficiently just to be regarded with disapprobation by both parties. But whereas in the Dominion even the discontented acquiesced, the Senate of the United States, under the influence of the Irish vote, refused the majority required by law. Lord Salisbury's choice of "Jack Cade," as he had once called his Envoy, was unfortunate. Mr. Chamberlain had many enemies, and he liked, as Judge Jeffreys said, to give them all a lick with the rough side of his tongue. It is a perfectly harmless amusement for those who do not want anything from the objects of their attack. For those who do it costs more than it is worth.

Feb. 15, 1888. Mr. Chamberlain's mission.

In the summer of the Jubilee year what remained of Zululand was annexed to the British Empire, and incorporated with Natal. Thus Sir Bartle Frere's policy was completed after his death, and the formidable power against which he had successfully contended ceased finally to exist. Not a voice was raised at home against a step which ten years before would have excited every Radical and philanthropist in the country. Facts had been too strong for the amiable sentimentalists who restored Cetewayo, and sent him to his doom. Frere always understood the Zulus, and knew how to deal with them. So did the Boers. Disarmed, and peacefully governed, the Zulus made loyal subjects and thriving agriculturists. Armed and independent, they were as dangerous a man-slaying machine as existed on the face of the globe. Sir Henry Holland, who was Colonial Secretary at this time, had been, unlike any of his predecessors, a member of the permanent staff in the Colonial Office. He was a prudent, cool-headed man who knew his business thoroughly, and understood the "three-cornered problem" which

Annexation of Zululand.

had baffled so many Secretaries of State. The white races in South Africa, Dutch and British, had no cause of quarrel. The black man, if he had been left to himself, would have made short work of both. When the Queen's Jubilee was celebrated at Ekowe, ten thousand Zulus saluted the British flag. The natives had ceased to be dangerous. What ought to have aroused attention and anxiety was the rapid influx of gold-diggers to the new town of Johannesburg in the Transvaal. 1887.

The year 1887 was the last of Lord Dufferin's brilliant and triumphant Viceroyalty. After the annexation of Upper Burmah on New Year's Day, 1886, he had the difficult task of putting down the Dacoits, or robbers in gangs, and of pacifying a region less easy to tranquillise than to conquer. With the military assistance of Sir Frederick Roberts, and the civil assistance of Sir Charles Bernard, he completely accomplished this task. Still more important was his arrangement of the Afghan boundary with Russia through Sir West Ridgeway. "I am one of those," Lord Dufferin wrote, "who do not believe that Russia will actually invade India during the present century, unless indeed she should produce a hero with the genius and ambition of Napoleon or Alexander, and even then I think she would come to grief."[1] Lord Dufferin recognised that Russia's advance through Turcomania up to the Afghan frontier was equally inevitable and beneficial. But, at the same time, he adhered and gave full effect to the policy of both parties in England by treating Afghanistan itself as beyond the legitimate sphere of Russian influence. Lord Salisbury was not less but more conciliatory than Mr. Gladstone. In return for Khojah Saleh, which M. de Giers admitted to be Afghan, Russia

The Afghan boundary.

[1] Lyall's *Life of Dufferin*, vol. ii. p. 109.

1887. received an accession of territory in the valleys of the Kushk and the Kashan. But the important point was that the Amir, who trusted Lord Dufferin, cordially acquiesced in the new frontier, and the submission of his rival, Ayub Khan, to the Indian Government, made his throne absolutely
July 22. secure. The signature of the Treaty at Petersburg put an end to serious and thorny negotiations, which in the spring of 1885 had brought England and Russia to the brink of war. It was characteristic of Lord Salisbury that, though he had in Opposition used against Russia language of the utmost asperity, he maintained in office a tone of calmness and a spirit of wisdom which speedily removed all obstacles to peace.

Lord Salisbury's foreign policy, in which he was supported by Mr. Gladstone, was union with the Central Powers of Europe. During the autumn of 1887[1] there was formed the Triple Alliance between
The Triple Alliance. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. This curious and unexpected combination, called, not without warrant, a League of Peace, arose out of a visit paid to Prince Bismarck at Friedrichsruh by the Italian Premier, Signor Crispi. Crispi had been in his youth a fervent Italian patriot. By birth a Sicilian, he had joined Garibaldi's famous expedition of the Thousand to Sicily in 1860. An Italian treaty with Austria would have infuriated Garibaldi, and astounded Cavour. But in Italy, hatred of Austria had long given way to fear of France. The Italian policy of Louis Napoleon, dictated by Cavour, and driven home by Orsini, had never been popular on the northern side of the Alps. Although Italy had, since the establishment of her union and independence, made great pecuniary sacrifices to support her position as a European Power, her army was not equal to the

[1] See the *Times*, November 5.

French, and the growth of her navy was hampered by want of funds. Her colonial expansion in North-East Africa was drawing her into a conflict with Abyssinia, and the French Republic was more inclined to reproach her with ingratitude for the past than to render her any service in the future. On the one hand, Bismarck had for twenty years been a friend of Italy, who owed at least as much to Sadowa as to Magenta or Solferino. Crispi had none of Ricasoli's reluctance to depend upon foreign aid. He was an ambitious man, eager to play a part in the politics of Europe, and joined readily in a precautionary movement against France, who, for her part, turned to Russia. Lord Salisbury favoured the Triple Alliance, believing it to be pacific, and distrusting the policy of France, as one of drift. But the special object of Great Britain was, in his opinion, to maintain the balance of naval power in the Mediterranean, and to prevent it from becoming a French lake. France had shown at Constantinople her hostility to England, Bismarck had dropped his habit of complaint with British policy since Lord Granville and Lord Derby left the Cabinet. Under these conditions Lord Salisbury thought it most prudent to give the Triple Alliance a friendly encouragement from the outside, and to let it be known in foreign Chanceries that England could not be indifferent to the future of the Mediterranean. Beyond that he would not go. He did nothing to which France could object. He said nothing which could inflame the mutual hostility of France and Germany, then greater than it had been at any time since the war. But, as a British Minister, it was natural that he should welcome and encourage a combination which would tend to check any aggressive designs either in Petersburg or in Paris. If in the course of this policy he was driven further towards a

1887.

The balance of power in the Mediterranean.

1887. German alliance than he meant to go, and if, on the other hand, he led Italy to form expectations which he was prevented from fulfilling, he must at the same time be pronounced to have thrown the weight of British influence at a critical moment decisively into the scale of peace.

In Egypt Lord Salisbury did not disturb the conclusions of his predecessors. He left the Soudan to the Khalifa, as they had left it to the Mahdi, strengthening the defences at Wady Halfa, while Sir Evelyn Baring, assisted by Sir Edgar Vincent, kept a tight hold on finance, whether Nubar or Riaz was the nominal Premier. Suakin on the Red Sea was maintained as a check upon the slave-trade, and in the autumn of 1888 a small military expedition under General Grenfell was sent to protect the town from a threatened attack by Dervishes. General Grenfell's operations were completely successful. Most of his troops were native, and had been raised under British occupation. Commanded by British officers, and supported by the 20th Hussars, they routed the Dervishes with ease, and effectually secured Suakin from attack by land. Egypt was perfectly safe, so long as the British occupation continued. What would happen if it ceased was a question which no European Power, not even France, cared seriously to face.

Relief of Suakin.

The principal and most solid achievement of Lord Salisbury, who will be remembered as Foreign Secretary rather than as Prime Minister, was his share in the partition of Africa among the Powers of Europe. It was German policy which had made the question acute. Before the restoration of the Transvaal to the Boers in 1881, Germans had begun to settle there, and Sir Bartle Frere had warned the Government of Lord Beaconsfield that, in his opinion, an African Empire was seriously

The partition of Africa.

contemplated at Berlin. Bismarck, however, was not favourable to this project, and it was only after Lord Granville had refused to be responsible for Damaraland or Namaqualand, on the west coast of Africa, that they were annexed by Germany in 1884. The following year, after Bismarck's quarrel with Granville had been made up, Germany recognised Santa Lucia Bay on the east coast as British, besides promising not to acquire any territory, or establish any Protectorate, between Santa Lucia and the Portuguese settlement of Delagoa. On the other hand, when Germany, in collusion with native chiefs, took the Cameroons and Togoland, it was only the prompt action of Consul Hewitt that secured for Great Britain the district of the Oil Rivers at the mouths of the Niger. At the Berlin Conference of 1885 it was agreed that no part of the African coast could be annexed on paper; that effective occupation was necessary to found a valid title; and that notice must be given to the other signatory Powers with the object of securing recognition for adverse claims. Seven years after Lord Beaconsfield's refusal to accept a British Protectorate of Zanzibar in 1878, Dr. Peters, a German explorer, acquired for the German East Africa Company a large amount of territory which might have been obtained for England. When Lord Salisbury came to the Foreign Office for the second time at the beginning of 1887, Sir George Goldie had received a charter for the Royal Niger Company, and the Congo State, of which the King of the Belgians had been made Sovereign, was an established fact. Further south, Bechuanaland had been cleared of Boer raiders by Sir Charles Warren, and placed under British protection by the Government of Mr. Gladstone. Bechuanaland lay immediately to the west of the South African Republics. Immediately to the north of it

1887.

1887. was Matabeleland, and the chief of that territory,
Annexation of Matabeleland. Lobengula by name, was induced by Mr. Cecil Rhodes, the "Diamond King," to appeal for British assistance against his Dutch neighbours. The power of Mr. Rhodes in South Africa was obviously growing with great rapidity. His friends called him statesmanlike. His enemies called him unscrupulous. It is possible to be both. Combining vast wealth with great natural ability, a vivid imagination, and an extremely resolute will, he set himself to extend the British dominion in South Africa over native tribes as far north as
Feb. 11, 1888. the River Zambesi. Lobengula's appeal, which simple souls at home treated as voluntary, was answered by the peaceful assumption of British authority over Matabeleland, and over the adjacent
And of Mashonaland. district of Mashonaland as well. Rhodes's next
The South African Company. step was to found a Company, half commercial, half imperial, on the model of that magnificent Corporation which administered India from the days of Hastings to the days of Canning. There was gold in Matabeleland, and the rich mines of the Transvaal, now in full working order, attracted a large number of shareholders. The titular chairman of the Company was the Duke of Abercorn, but its real head was Mr. Rhodes. To obtain a
Oct. 15, 1889. Royal Charter was not difficult. Indeed, there was a much more recent precedent than the
Sept. 3, 1888. East India Company afforded. In the previous
The East African Company. year the British East African Company had been founded, also with a Royal Charter, under the chairmanship of Sir William Mackinnon, a Scottish merchant, who had obtained a lease of valuable territory in 1878 from Said Burghash, Sultan of Zanzibar. Lord Beaconsfield's Government refused to ratify or recognise the concession. The Cabinet of Lord Salisbury was more sympathetic. But meanwhile Germany had acquired the land

which Mackinnon would have made British; so that though the headquarters of the Company were at Mombasa on the coast, they were unable to extend their territory southward, and their principal acquisition was Uganda, on the shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza. 1887. Uganda.

It is obvious that these Companies, which have been most useful agents in the spread of British dominion, involve a corresponding amount of responsibility, for annexation is the cause as well as the consequence of war. Mackinnon was a friend to missionary enterprise, and became the patron of a Scottish mission in East Africa. Rhodes cared nothing for missionaries, and his ideals were materialistic. With him bigness was greatness, and the flag was an asset. So far as the politics of the mother-country were concerned, he had chosen his time well. Although the issue of a Royal Charter does not require the sanction of Parliament, the House of Commons might insist on its withdrawal, and put an end to the Government that granted it. But in 1890 the Liberal party were occupied with the Irish question, and the Irish Members themselves had received on behalf of their cause substantial help from Mr. Rhodes. Sir Hercules Robinson, High Commissioner for South Africa, and Governor of Cape Colony, was a thorough Constitutionalist, and suspicious of Imperialism. He was recalled, or encouraged to retire, in the summer of 1889, and his place was taken by Sir Henry Loch, then Governor of Victoria, who had been imprisoned by the Chinese Government in 1861.[1] In 1890 Rhodes, with the support of the Dutch, became Prime Minister of Cape Colony, and began to exercise upon the Cape Assembly an influence which was not entirely the result of persuasion.

Recall of Sir Hercules Robinson.

Rhodes in Cape Colony.

[1] See vol. ii. p. 267.

1890. His double position as the real ruler both of Cape Colony and of Matabeleland gave him complete ascendency over his nominal superior, Sir Henry Loch. The Charter of the South African Company was granted on the 15th of October 1889, and thus a totally new force was created in the most electrical part of the British Empire. For the moment, however, the Queen's Government was relieved from immediate responsibility in what had been Lobengula's dominions. Security of tenure, saving the case of misconduct on their part, which would empower the Colonial Secretary to withdraw the Charter, was granted to the Company for twenty-five years, and Rhodes became virtual dictator of a land which afterwards bore his name. No one at that time, unless it were Mr. Rhodes himself, foresaw the possible consequences to South Africa of the gold-diggers' settlement in the Transvaal.

Portuguese aggression.

The first effect of establishing this new Company was to provoke an unjustifiable act of aggression from Portugal. Major Serpa Pinto, a Portuguese explorer, attacked the Makololo tribe, north of the Zambesi, and took from them two British flags, which they had received, as a pledge of English
1889. support, from Consul Johnston.[1] Serpa Pinto had under him a considerable body of Zulus, armed with Winchester rifles, and it was clear that he contemplated a further advance into territory south of the Zambesi already acquired by Great Britain. Lord Salisbury, however, at once took prompt and decisive action which avoided further bloodshed, and vindicated the just rights of his country. Serpa Pinto's attack was made on the 8th of November 1889. On the 6th of January
1890. 1890, Lord Salisbury, in the name of the Queen, demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Portu-

[1] Afterwards Sir Harry Johnston.

guese forces from the River Shire, which flows out of Lake Nyassa into the Zambesi on the north, and also from Mashonaland on the south of the Zambesi. When the Foreign Minister of Portugal, Barros Gomes, endeavoured to temporise, and suggested arbitration under the Act of Berlin,[1] Lord Salisbury replied that if either party were entitled to claim the benefit of that international instrument, it was England, and directed the instant departure of the British Minister from Lisbon unless his demands were at once accepted. This firmness, energetically seconded by the Minister, Mr. Petre, himself, was successful, and Portugal gave way. The incident was a disagreeable one for the new king, who had only just come to the throne, and a good deal of idle sentiment about "our ancient ally" was wasted by random critics at home. But Lord Salisbury's conduct was irreproachable. To treat small States and big States alike is always wise and right. To let a small Power take advantage of its weakness by disregarding international law, and the claims of others, is neither sound morality nor common sense. Although threats of revolution and reprisal were freely uttered in Lisbon, where royalist principles had received a shock by the establishment of a Republic in Brazil, the Portuguese Monarchy was not abolished, and the peace of Africa was not disturbed.

1890. Oct. 9, 1889.

A more important question than any dispute with Portugal occupied the Foreign Office in the spring and summer of 1890. Germany had acquired a considerable portion of East Africa, and put in a novel claim to what she called the *Hinterland* of Zanzibar. The doctrine of the *Hinterland* is that when any Power has taken possession of a port or coast-line, no other Power can claim unoccupied

The doctrine of the *Hinterland*.

[1] 1885.

1890. territory behind it. Assenting in substance to this principle, Lord Salisbury arranged with Count Caprivi, Chancellor of the German Empire in succession to Bismarck, who had quarrelled with the young Emperor, William the Second, a mutual understanding about British and German "spheres of influence." A sphere of influence, like the doctrine of the *Hinterland*, was a novelty in the law of nations. It could not of itself create, nor did it purport to create, any sovereign jurisdiction or right. It did not assume to bind, nor could it bind, any Power except those who agreed to it. But it was nevertheless extremely valuable in preventing quarrels between representatives of European States who had undertaken the work of African exploration. By this Agreement between Great Britain and Germany the Stevenson Road was recognised as the frontier. Nyassa and Uganda became British, the line being drawn across Lake Victoria Nyanza. A British Protectorate was recognised over Zanzibar, including the island of that name, and the adjacent island of Pemba. As a set-off for this recognition Great Britain ceded to Germany the islet of Heligoland, which lies contiguous to the mouth of the Elbe. This cession made some stir in England, which, however, calmed down when it became known that though the Heligolanders had not been consulted, they might at their option remain British subjects. Heligoland, which had only been an English possession since the close of the French war, was useless to this country. Germany, on the other hand, had long wanted it for a coaling-station; and when Lord Granville was in office the German Ambassador had sounded him on the subject. "Count Münster said it was as good as impossible that Germany and England should ever be at war, but the cession of Heligoland would strengthen the good feeling of

Spheres of influence.

July 1, 1890.

Zanzibar and Heligoland.

Germany towards this country to an extraordinary degree. I said," Lord Granville continues, "I supposed the cession of Gibraltar would strengthen our good relations with Spain; but the Count denied that there was any similarity in the two cases."[1] Lord Granville's retort was smart enough. But smart sayings do not cement the peace of Europe, and Count Münster's language had much sense in it. To have given up even Heligoland for nothing would have been unwise. The Protectorate of Zanzibar was a solid advantage to the possessors of Uganda, and well worth the price Lord Salisbury gave for it. Lord Granville had committed a grave error in ignoring Germany; and if Lord Salisbury seemed rather too anxious to conciliate her, he gave up no British interest for the purpose. Mr. Gladstone did not resist this policy. He took a line which he called constitutional, but which seemed on the face of it anything rather than Liberal, or democratic. He protested against the introduction of a Bill for transferring Heligoland to Germany, alleging the rather dangerous proposition that to cede any part of the British Empire was the inherent right of the Crown. Such criticism might amuse constitutional jurists. It had no substance in it whatever, and there was really far more importance in a passing remark of Mr. Gladstone's that France might have something to say about the Protectorate of Zanzibar. France had a good deal to say, and of course no treaty with the German Empire could affect the rights of the French Republic. Unfortunately the feelings of French Republicans had been needlessly wounded in 1889 by the withdrawal of the British Ambassador, Lord Lytton, from the opening of an exhibition to commemorate the assemblage of the States-General a hundred years before. Most

1890.

The French centenary.

England's withdrawal.

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Granville*, vol. ii. p. 351.

1890. Englishmen have always held that foreigners had no right to cut off the heads of their kings. But this exhibition commemorated bloodless and pacific events, while it was unreasonable for the British Government to set up as censors of republican institutions on the other side of the Channel. With regard to Zanzibar, however, compensation was easily found. France desired a Protectorate of Madagascar quite as strongly as England desired a Protectorate of Zanzibar, and British recognition of the one was given in exchange for French recognition of the other. Opportunity was also taken to mark out a French sphere of influence, which included, besides the French Congo on the west coast, occupied in 1888, the whole of the Sahara from Algeria to Timbuctoo. Although Lord Salisbury, with characteristic irony, congratulated France upon having annexed so much of the "light soil" of the Sahara, it appeared to those who did not carefully distinguish between area and value that France had received the lion's share of the spoil. Lord Salisbury certainly did not show himself grasping, and the French Congo has proved invaluable to France. But though Lord Salisbury may have been too much inclined to treat the whole matter in a flippant spirit, as a dispute over unknown countries which did not belong to the disputants, his deeds were better than his words, and his African policy was not more pacific than wise. A compact with Portugal put the finishing stroke to his scheme for the partition of Africa. It was certainly not made too soon. In the month of April a party of British prospectors under Sir John Willoughby had been stopped at Beira, and prevented from going up the country to Mashonaland by the River Pungwe, of which the free navigation had been expressly guaranteed. Lord Salisbury's forbearance in being satisfied with

Madagascar.

The French Sahara.

June 11, 1891.

a mere disavowal of this outrage by the Portuguese Government is a sufficient answer to the charge of bearing hardly upon a small Power by reason of its smallness. The Treaty awarded to Portugal fifty thousand square miles on the north of the Zambesi in return for a narrow strip of Manicaland which gave access to the dominions of the Chartered Company. Since 1891 Africa has not been disturbed by the rival claims of European States to unlimited or unallotted land. Other difficulties of a serious kind have led to consequences more serious still. But with these Lord Salisbury was not at that time concerned. His object was to prevent European war on account of African territory, and in that he entirely succeeded. He maintained the rights of his own country without encroaching on the rights of others. 1890. Treaty with Portugal.

Lord Salisbury thus succeeded where Lord Granville failed. Understanding the situation, which his predecessor misconceived, he found an honourable way out of a difficulty that might have led to consequences of the most serious kind. He had one great advantage in that Prince Bismarck was not his antagonist. That illustrious man had been reconciled to the British Government before the Liberals left office in 1885,[1] and with the policy of colonial expansion, so popular with German merchants, his sympathy was never warm. On the 17th of March 1890, before the Anglo-German Treaty had been concluded, he resigned all his offices and retired into private life. No event in European politics since the foundation of the German Empire had a more startling effect in England, and in the long series of Sir John Tenniel's famous cartoons none is more justly celebrated than the picture of the German ship dropping her pilot. The young Emperor had resolved to be his Bismarck's retirement.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 325.

1890. own Foreign Minister, and colonial expansion found in him a hearty friend. But there was no possible successor to Bismarck, and Lord Salisbury's path was smoothed. England became a great African, as well as a great Asiatic, Power. Germany became, or endeavoured to become, a colonising State. She had not, however, the aptitude, or the tradition. In the application of science to business, and in readiness to meet the demands of new customers, her manufacturers are superior to their British rivals. But, good soldiers, good traders, good men of science as they are, the Germans are not a governing race. Just as their restrictive tariffs hamper them in neutral markets, so their impatience of individual freedom brings them into collision with those they attempt to rule. An English gentleman, like an English sovereign and an English bill of exchange, passes current throughout the habitable globe, without any reference to the social class from which he comes. Whenever, and wherever, the British Government has undertaken directly through its own servants to administer distant territory for public purposes alone, it has always done so justly, wisely, and well. Lord Salisbury's share in the partition of Africa is not the least of the services which he rendered to the British Empire at home and abroad.

1891. Since the annexation of Upper Burmah five years before, and its pacification by Lord Dufferin, there had been peace in India, and Lord Lansdowne's Viceroyalty had been undisturbed, when suddenly, on the 30th of March 1891, the country was startled by news which revived, though on a very small scale, the horrors of 1857. The little Manipur. Principality of Manipur, north of Burmah, south of Assam, and east of Bengal, was governed by a native Rajah, with an English Resident. It was, in short, a protected State. In September the Rajah

was deposed by his brothers, and fled to Calcutta. 1891.
Lord Lansdowne decided that the second brother, the Jubraj or heir, should be acknowledged as ruler, and that the third brother, who had been Senapati, or Commander-in-Chief, should be removed from the country. The Secretary of State, Lord Cross, was not consulted, and Mr. Quinton, Commissioner of Assam, was sent to carry out the orders of the Viceroy, with a hopelessly inadequate escort of four hundred Goorkhas. He arrived at Manipur on the 22nd of March 1891, and acted with a rashness beside which Lord Lansdowne's conduct was prudence itself. He resolved to arrest the Senapati at a Durbar. Mr. Grimwood, the British Resident, who knew the place and the people, had been against interfering with the Senapati; but his advice was overruled. The Senapati, having got wind of Mr. Quinton's intentions, refused to attend the Durbar. An unsuccessful attempt to seize him in the Palace, where he was protected by the Jubraj, led to an attack upon the Residency, while the desperate acceptance of proposals for negotiation within the Palace walls involved the loss of Mr. Grimwood's life, and the capture of his whole party. All of them, from Mr. Quinton downwards, were at once beheaded, martyrs to their own rashness as well as to the barbarity of their foes. Those who were left in the Residency surrendered it when their ammunition failed, and escaped into British India after hardships of every sort, notwithstanding an almost continuous fire. They were assisted by the coolness and intrepidity of Mrs. Grimwood, the young wife of the murdered Resident, but they had to march thirty miles without food, eating grass and leaves. Mrs. Grimwood, who knew nothing of her husband's fate, earned the order of the Red Cross, which she afterwards received from the Queen. Manipur

Massacre of British residents.

Heroism of Mrs. Grimwood.

1891. was of course soon reduced to submission. Three marching columns were sent from Kohima on the north, Tamma on the south, and Cachar on the west. General Collett and General Graham were in command. But the hero of the expedition was a young lieutenant, Charles James Grant, who volunteered for the relief of Manipur, and with fewer than a hundred native soldiers held Thobal, between Tammu and the capital, against a large force of the enemy. When Manipur had been occupied, the authors of the massacre were hanged, or transported to the Andaman islands.

Mr. Quinton had paid for his foolhardiness with his life, and the unwisdom of the Indian Government was soon forgotten. But when Sir William Harcourt brought the subject before the House of Commons, less by way of censure than for the sake of information, the Under-Secretary for India delivered a singular speech. Sir John Gorst, whose great abilities had not been adequately recognised by the Prime Minister in 1886, proved a far more damaging critic of Ministerial policy than Sir William Harcourt. What, he asked, had been the practice of the British Government in all parts of the world? To promote harmless mediocrity, to discourage and suppress originality and independence. He had observed it as a young man in New Zealand. It had been applied in recent years to Cetewayo in South Africa, to Arabi in Egypt, and to Zubair, then a prisoner at Malta. Those who read between the lines discovered an allusion to the relative positions of Lord Cross and the speaker himself. But Sir John Gorst indignantly denied that any such comparison was present to his mind, and a more probable, as well as a more creditable, explanation is that, in the words of a cynical colleague, Sir John always had "the taint of philanthropy," which led him to sympathise with

June 16.

Sir John Gorst's speech.

subject races." Not that any taint or any pre- 1891.
judice was required to perceive the incapacity which this enterprise displayed. Every one concerned in it from the Viceroy downwards, except Mrs. Grimwood and Major Grant, V.C., seemed to have crammed as many blunders as possible into a given space of time. The Indian Empire itself would not endure many such exhibitions, and the Mutiny would have been fatal if Lord Canning had sent four hundred men to do the work of four thousand. Lord Canning had some reason to complain of dilatory indifference at home. But Lord Salisbury and his colleagues were in no way responsible for the blunders and bloodshed of Manipur.

CHAPTER V

FINANCE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1887. In 1887 Ireland was consigned to Mr. Balfour, as in 1881 it had been consigned to Mr. Forster. When the Crimes Act and the Land Act were both passed, Parliament had leisure to consider for a time that part of the United Kingdom called Great Britain. The first business of the Session in 1888 was the further simplification of procedure.

New Rules of Procedure.

1888. It was ordered that the House of Commons should meet at three instead of four o'clock, and that all opposed business, with a few specified exceptions, should cease at midnight. The number of votes necessary for closing debate was reduced to a hundred, the Speaker or Chairman was empowered to stop irrelevant speeches, and some opportunities of debate, such as the motion for going into Committee on a Bill, were abolished. It was further prescribed that on Wednesdays after Whitsuntide those Bills should have precedence which had made the most progress in passing through the House. The new rules were passed without any difficulty in a few days. Mr. Smith was just the man to get through the details of business rapidly, and the real revolution, compared with which all else was insignificant, had been the closure. The Irish Members had pulled down the pillars of Parliamentary freedom, and the structure had fallen upon themselves.

1888. The conversion of the National Debt, which Mr. Childers had vainly attempted four years earlier, was accomplished by Mr. Goschen with entire success. The interest on the Consolidated Fund, which is of course paid by the public, was at once reduced from three per cent to two and three-quarters for the next fifteen years, after which it would be two and a half. The offer of a small premium, five shillings in a hundred pounds, was enough to obtain the consent of nine fundholders in every ten. Only forty millions sterling had to be found for those who required, as they were entitled, to be paid off at par. Bankers and brokers received a small commission, to which Mr. Gladstone as a financial purist objected, though it undoubtedly promoted the success of the scheme.

Conversion of the Debt.

March 27.

Mr. Goschen's second Budget was one of the most complicated ever presented to the House of Commons. Except that it favoured the landed interest, to which Mr. Goschen had not always been so tender, no intelligible principle can be extracted from it. The estimated surplus was, in round numbers, two millions and a third. But a Local Government Bill had been promised in the Queen's Speech, and this was made the opportunity still further to increase the mischievous system of grants for local objects from the national Exchequer. Hitherto these subventions had been definite sums of money, their amount being rather more than two millions and a half. Henceforth there would be handed over to local authorities, in lieu of these grants, a number of existing licences to the amount of three millions, and new licences valued at eight hundred thousand pounds. But that was by no means all. Inasmuch as personal property had always been exempt from rating, whereas real property was bought and sold on the

The Budget of 1888.

Increase of grants-in-aid.

1888. assumption that it was liable to rates, half the probate-duty would be paid to the financial authorities of counties and boroughs, bringing up the total grant-in-aid to five millions and a half. Among the new licences would be a van tax of a pound on every vehicle weighing more than ten hundredweight, and a wheel tax of half a crown a wheel on every carriage weighing more than two hundredweight. The wheel and van tax proved so unpopular that it was ultimately dropped. The rest of the Budget became law, including a welcome reduction of the income tax from sevenpence to sixpence in the pound, and an extra duty of five shillings a dozen on champagne. This Budget did much to settle Mr. Goschen's reputation as a financier. It showed him to be adroit and ingenious, more adroit if less ingenious than Mr. Lowe, but wanting in the firm grasp of large principles evinced by the Budgets of Gladstone, Peel, and Pitt. The country gentlemen, however, were well satisfied. They had at last a Chancellor of the Exchequer who, if not of them, was on their side. Mr. Goschen's associations were all with the City, and yet he had opened the sluices of the Treasury to float county government out of the dock.

Wheel and Van Tax.

The Local Government Bill, introduced by Mr. Ritchie, was a measure of very great importance, exceedingly well drawn. The pith and marrow of it was the substitution for administrative purposes of county councils elected by the ratepayers instead of county magistrates nominated by the Lord Lieutenant. As a court of justice, and of appeal, the magistrates would continue to sit in Quarter Sessions as before. It is remarkable that no Liberal Government should have made this change. For though the Quarter Sessions had done their work honestly, economically, and not inefficiently,

County Councils.

they were absolutely free from the control of those whose money they spent. In future this anomaly would be removed, and a representative body chosen by the ratepayers would manage bridges, roads, drains, and other county business. The police, being partly administrative and partly judicial, were placed under joint committees of councillors and magistrates. Only one part of the Bill raised serious controversy, though Liberals voted against the provision for co-opted aldermen on the ground that every councillor should be elected by the ratepayers. The most hotly disputed clauses were those which made county councils the licensing authority, and authorised them to refuse the renewal of licences with compensation to the licence-holder. This provision rested upon a mistaken view of the law, laid down by the Solicitor-General,[1] and afterwards declared by the House of Lords to be erroneous. The Government asserted, and the House of Lords denied, that a licensed victualler had a vested interest in the renewal of his licence. It was granted in law for twelve months only, and the magistrates had an unfettered discretion to reissue it or withhold it in every case. After losing a by-election at Southampton, on account, as was supposed, of these clauses, the Government withdrew them and left the law as it was.

1888.

Proposed endowment of public houses.

In London, which, like other large towns, was made by the Bill a county of itself, an elected Council, with co-opted aldermen, superseded the Metropolitan Board of Works. The Metropolitan Board was at that very time the subject of inquiry by a Statutory Commission, which afterwards found that the most serious charges made against it were untrue. But enough remained to give it an unpleasant reputation, and no public body ever

The London County Council.

[1] Sir Edward Clarke.

1889. excited less regret. For the first time the people of London were enabled to manage their own local affairs, and in March 1889 the London County Council elected Lord Rosebery as their Chairman. The only part of the Bill which betrayed its Conservative origin was the exemption of the City. The old Corporation, the one unreformed Corporation of any note left in the country, was scrupulously spared. It is also probable, though by no means certain, that a Liberal Government would have given the London County Council control of the metropolitan police. Mr. Ritchie left them under the Home Office, his theory being that they were a national and not a municipal force. Taken as a whole, this Bill was one of the best and soundest ever submitted to Parliament. It raised the reputation of the Cabinet, and showed that the Liberal Unionists were able to exercise great influence upon their Conservative allies. Its intrinsic virtues were largely to increase the public spirit of the counties, to extend local patriotism beyond the sphere of the landed interest, and to give London outside the City the corporate individuality characteristic of other great towns.

The London County Council has sometimes been called by enthusiasts London's Parliament. The phrase is of course a loose one. The Council is a statutory body, bound hand and foot by the sections in the Act which created it. Speaking generally, we may assert that it cannot make anybody do anything except pay rates. But its administrative sphere is vast, and its members, though unpaid, are among the most industrious servants of the public. Retired civilians from the Treasury, from the Board of Trade, from the office of the Government draftsmen, have assisted it with their experience. A few working men, of whom John Burns was the most conspicuous, have found in

the plain buildings at Spring Gardens ample scope 1889.
for their energy and their democratic spirit. All classes of society, including peers, have contributed members to the Council, both as elected councillors and as co-opted aldermen. The English habit of acting in parties very soon made itself felt. Home Rule for Ireland was clearly irrelevant. Nor did the ordinary distinction between Liberal and Conservative adapt itself readily to municipal affairs, at least in London. But a dividing line, a strange object of search, was found between Progressives, who wished the Council to use all its powers, and Moderates, who desired to be cautious in selecting only practical enterprises. The Progressive party found more favour with the ratepayers than their rivals, even when the bulk of the Metropolitan constituencies were returning Conservatives to Parliament, partly perhaps because Home Rule was eliminated from the contest, but partly because the Moderates appeared disloyal to the body for which they stood. It was no secret that many London Tories detested the Council altogether, and regarded Mr. Ritchie as a traitor to their cause. The Progressives, on the other hand, were very soon discovered to be not dangerous agitators, but reasonable and careful administrators of a machine in whose utility they had faith. The finances of the Council were wisely and prudently controlled by men who would have made competent Chancellors of the Exchequer. The rates were somewhat higher than they had been under the Metropolitan Board. But drainage was improved, unhealthy houses were pulled down, open spaces were marked out and planted, the supply of water was more plentiful, there was a sense of good government in the air. If rich men grumbled about extravagance, poor men felt that they got value for their money.

1888. It has been said that the compound householder does not feel rates because he does not directly pay them. He pays rent, however, and he very soon finds in London that rent goes up when rates are high. That is a far better guarantee against extravagance than any limitation by Act of Parliament. The Local Government Act of 1888 is a statute of which any ministry and any party might well be proud. Being at once Liberal and Conservative, it came with peculiar propriety from a Conservative Administration kept in office by Liberal votes. It did not, however, lead to municipal Conservatism. Even in the spring of 1895, when Liberalism had fallen on evil days and evil tongues, until it seemed to be, and in fact was, on the verge of utter collapse, the Progressives of the County Council, driven to fight for their lives, just managed to hold the fort. Only on that occasion have the Moderate party made anything in the nature of a successful stand against the progress of municipal development. As a general rule, the ratepayers felt that they had had enough of them on the Metropolitan Board. They welcomed the public spirit so familiar in Liverpool and Manchester, Glasgow and Birmingham, Bristol and Leeds, but hitherto unknown in the greatest city of all.

Mr. Bradlaugh's Oaths Act.

The year 1888 witnessed the final close of an old and almost outworn controversy. Mr. Bradlaugh, who had become an active and useful Member of Parliament, carried a Bill through the House of Commons, which the House of Lords did not reject, for enabling any one to make an affirmation instead of taking the oath prescribed by law, if his religious belief condemned oaths, or if he had no religious belief at all. The wheel was come full circle. Parliament, at the instance of Mr. Bradlaugh himself, had deliberately reversed the policy which prevented him for five

years from sitting in the House of Commons. If such a Bill had been passed in 1880, instead of 1888, grievous injustice would have been avoided, scandalous scenes would have been prevented, and religion would not have been associated in the minds of the working classes with the maintenance of artificial disqualification. Both Houses now admitted that the only man who had been excluded by the theistic test had in fact defeated it, and that if it had been successful, it would have been wrong. The criminal folly of persecution had seldom been so clearly displayed. 1888.

Before the regular Session of 1888 was closed in the middle of August by an adjournment till the autumn, a small measure of public utility was passed for the amendment of the Railway Commission Act. The number of Commissioners was reduced to two, still at the disproportionate salary of £3000,[1] and it was enacted that a Judge, from the High Court in England or Ireland, from the Court of Session in Scotland, should preside over the sittings of the Commission. Canals were brought under the statute, and railway companies were restrained from protecting themselves against rivalry by acquiring more of these water-ways. They had, however, purchased a good many, in order to prevent them from being used, and the trade of England has been seriously impeded by the neglect of its canals.

[1] See vol. iii. p. 314.

CHAPTER VI

RESOLUTE GOVERNMENT

1888. Feb. 9. THE Queen's Speech for 1888 announced that in Ireland "agrarian crime had diminished, and the power of coercive conspiracies had sensibly abated."

Political prisoners. This not very exuberant declaration of optimism was at once followed by a formal statement from the Speaker that nine Irish Members had been sent to prison during the recess by magistrates administering the Crimes Act. Of these the most important was Mr. William O'Brien, whose part in inaugurating the Plan of Campaign has already been described. Mr. O'Brien, when confined in Tullamore gaol during the month of November, had refused to wear prison clothes, and kept his bed for some days, until a new suit of Irish tweed was surreptitiously placed by an unknown hand in his cell. "O'Brien's breeches" became a favourite topic on Unionist platforms with orators whose natural stock of humour was apt to run dry. The general public did not see the joke. Imprisonment for political offences, though it may be necessary, is always peculiarly odious, and the vast majority of Mr. O'Brien's countrymen regarded him not as a criminal, but as a martyr. In any other country than the United Kingdom, except Russia, he would have been kept in simple confinement, and carefully distinguished from those who wore the livery of crime. To Mr. Balfour considerations of that

kind were sentimental rubbish. He was fighting the Irish Members, fighting for victory, and he did not mean to lose any advantage which the law gave him. For the leaders of Irish opinion his remedy was a plank bed, and he thought that when they had lain on it once, they would not want to lie on it any more. He was not cruel or vindictive, only unimaginative and contemptuous. If he had himself thought any political principle worth going to prison for, he would have gone without making a fuss. The Celtic temperament seemed to him ridiculous, and Irish politics a children's game. Of Mr Parnell's frigid, disdainful haughtiness he did stand, or appear to stand, in some awe. For the rest he did not care. They were unlike the sort of people with whom he mixed. His method of administration was severely simple. There was not much crime in Ireland, and he did very little to diminish it. But speakers who defended boycotting, or the Plan of Campaign, were prosecuted, and as a result of these prosecutions, or of the latest Land Act, rents were rather more regularly paid. 1888.

The people of England and Scotland did not altogether approve this system of government. Although the majority were disposed to wait and see what came of it, some manifestations of the new Unionism were extremely distasteful. One Irish Member became temporarily famous because he was arrested under an Irish warrant in London. The arrest was regular, for the warrant had been backed by a metropolitan magistrate. But it had an ill look. It seemed a poor imitation of the abandoned proposal for trying Irish prisoners on this side of the Channel. Mr. Balfour had a clearer head than Mr. Forster's, and the law which he administered was more in harmony with constitutional principles. Yet he fell into the same Coercion in England. June 23.

1888. mistake of confounding cause with effect, of punishing the agitators instead of removing the source of agitation. Two agrarian murders of horrible atrocity, one near Tralee, the other near Listowel, were committed during the winter of 1887-88. In both cases the murderers were convicted and punished under the ordinary law after trial by jury. The Crimes Act was put in force against a ruffian who intimidated the daughter of a murdered man for giving evidence that led to the execution of his assassins, and he was sentenced to the well-deserved, if inadequate, punishment of six months in gaol. Had the efforts of the Irish Executive been wholly or mainly directed against such miscreants as the cowardly brute who threatened Norah Fitzmaurice, Mr. Balfour would have had nothing to defend, or to explain. The charge he had to meet was that through the Resident Magistrates, who had been appointed, and could be removed, by the Crown, he imprisoned Irish politicians for saying what English politicians could say with impunity. He replied that Ireland was not England, and that speeches which on this side of the Channel would be perfectly harmless, were on the other side of it followed by outrage, as those who made them knew. Fitzmaurice, for instance, before he was murdered in Kerry, had been denounced by the National League, and it could not be supposed that they were ignorant of what might happen to him in consequence of their denunciation. The murder of this man suggests some curious and interesting reflections. To apologise for it would be to violate all law, human and divine. If it had happened in England, it would have merely meant that two men were depraved and abandoned wretches. In Ireland it meant a great deal more. It was the symptom of a social disease. Fitzmaurice was a "land-grabber."

Case of Norah Fitzmaurice.

"Land-grabbing,"

English opinion regarded this word as an abusive nickname given to an honest man earning a livelihood by his own labour and capital upon a farm for which he paid a fair rent. Irish opinion stigmatised as a land-grabber a man who betrayed his class by covetously taking his neighbour's property. If there were no land-grabbers, the Nationalists argued, there would be no evictions, for a landlord would not wish his land to go uncultivated, and therefore would have no motive to evict. If, again, there were no evictions, there would be no rack-renting, so that the Irish tenant could live and thrive. When an English Judge said that the receiver was worse than the thief, he expressed precisely what the Irish peasant felt about the relations between a land-grabbing tenant and a rack-renting landlord. This is no answer to the Sixth Commandment, which is plain and broad. For murder there can be no adequate motive, as there can be no sufficient excuse. Yet land-hunger is an ailment which statesmen have to diagnose before they can cure it, and the diagnosis shows that it cannot be cured by amendments of criminal procedure. Mr. Balfour could of course say that the Land Act of 1881, which he opposed, and the Land Act of 1887, which he carried, were at least partial remedies. For a complete remedy he might look to the establishment of peasant ownership, and the expropriation of landlords. At the moment he had to keep order in Ireland, and he could only do it by treating violent language as a crime. 1888.

The opposition of the Liberal party was not altogether a disadvantage to him. He could hold his own against any antagonist in the House of Commons, and in Ireland the consciousness of English sympathy was a restraining influence upon the more ardent spirits of the League. Two

1888. prominent Liberals, Lord Ripon and Mr. Morley, visited Dublin early in February, just before the meeting of Parliament, were greeted with much popular enthusiasm, and received the freedom of the City. Irish Members, on the other hand, were eagerly welcomed on Liberal platforms in Great Britain, those who had been in prison exciting the most enthusiasm. This was called in the language of the sentimental a "union of hearts." It was not a wholesome state of things. The feeling on both sides was sincere, and Mr. Balfour's "criminals" were seen to be quite different from the really criminal class. They appeared to be genial, talkative, kind-hearted persons, not very remarkable, but what in England are called "good fellows." To associate them with crime was to the popular imagination impossible, so that "law and order" in Ireland became identified with an unjust and vindictive spirit. Mr. Parnell, who had been imprisoned, not by Mr. Balfour, but by Mr. Forster, stood coldly aloof from these demonstrations. His health may have been in part the cause. But though he was often mistaken for an Englishman by strangers, he neither liked Englishmen nor understood them. He was staying with a friend at Cork in 1887, when the union of hearts was newly cemented. His host said to him, in the course of conversation, "Mr. Parnell, every one in Cork is talking about Mr. Gladstone except you. I would like to know what you think of him now." "I think," was the reply, "of Mr. Gladstone and the English people what I have always thought of them. They will do what we make them do."[1] This attitude may have been a calculated pose, designed to impress his countrymen with a sense of his power. But as a matter of fact Mr. Parnell received the attentions of English Liberals, and

Ripon and Morley in Ireland.

The "union of hearts."

Parnell's aloofness.

[1] O'Brien's *Life of Parnell*, vol, ii. pp, 175-176.

even the plaudits of English crowds, with a civility which could not have been colder if he had been acknowledging or ignoring the attentions of his own countrymen. He approved of the British alliance, and of his followers appearing on platforms at by-elections in Great Britain. But he himself was very seldom seen there. Although his manners were correct, his reserve was icy, and conciliation was not in his line. No Unionist believed more firmly than he that Mr. Gladstone had taken up Home Rule for the sake of the Irish vote. He habitually attributed low motives to politicians, thinking that they were all alike, and that every man was guided by self-interest, whether avowed or concealed. 1888.

A day after the opening of Parliament an Irish Member was arrested just outside Palace Yard, and another was seized at the gates in mistake for a colleague. The same night the Member the police really wanted was surrounded on leaving the House by about a hundred Liberals and Nationalists, whom the police hustled and scattered in pursuit of their victim. The House of Commons refused to treat the apprehension of an innocent Member as a breach of privilege, and accepted the view of the Government that this sort of experience must in future be reckoned among the ordinary risks of Parliamentary life. If an English Member had been handcuffed, the consequences might have been serious. Over Ireland political parties were at daggers drawn, and what the Opposition denounced, Ministerialists were sure to approve. Public opinion, however, which is more impartial than the House of Commons, was puzzled and perplexed. Agrarian murders were disgraceful and abominable. Boycotting and intimidation were odious, though not quite unknown in English politics. But how the employment of detectives to

Feb. 10. Police and privilege.

1888. watch the entrances and exits of the House of Commons would prevent the crimes of the moonlighter, or the threats of the bully, was not by any means clear. When Carlyle heard of some contemplated burial in Westminster Abbey, he remarked sardonically, "There will be a general gaol-delivery in that place one of these days." It seemed as if preparations were being made for a sort of Parliamentary Assize, with the proviso that the dock was exclusively reserved for representatives of the Irish people.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Jan. 17.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who had twice been Chief Secretary, and was the least sentimental of politicians, had warned his constituents at Bristol against "our favourite English habit of measuring everything by the English rule, of bringing English prejudice to bear upon the settlement of Irish affairs, and of looking upon Irishmen as our inferiors rather than our equals." When Sir Michael, a month after this speech, re-entered the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade,[1] some modification of Irish affairs was expected. None occurred.

Feb. 17. Mr. O'Brien's speech.

But during the debate on the Address Mr. O'Brien, fresh from prison, delivered a speech which impressed even Unionists by its sincerity and magnanimity. Mr. O'Brien's fervid eloquence, however influential in Ireland, had, as a rule, no effect upon the House of Commons, which regarded it and him as hysterical. On this occasion circumstances favoured him, and he had a strong case to make. The majority were generous enough to feel some respect for a man who had at least suffered for his opinions, and Mr. O'Brien avoided the snare of playing martyr. The points which he made

[1] He took the place of Sir Frederick Stanley, created Lord Stanley of Preston, and appointed to succeed Lord Lansdowne as Governor-General of Canada. Lord Lansdowne succeeded Lord Dufferin as Viceroy of India, and Lord Dufferin became Ambassador at Rome.

were two, and they were extremely important. 1888.
He showed, giving chapter and verse, that the Plan of Campaign had succeeded, and that the attempt to suppress the National League had failed. Mr. Balfour's failure was certainly not due to any want of vigour on his part. Never for a moment did he relax his efforts, or yield to opposition, Irish or Parliamentary. He was zealously assisted by those more immediately concerned in the administration of the law. Under the Crimes Act every defendant sentenced to more than a month's imprisonment had the right of appeal to the County Court Judge, who was in Ireland independent of the Crown. This right was in several cases turned against appellants, whose sentences were not diminished but increased. A notable instance was Father McFadden, a popular priest of Gweedore, who appealed against a sentence of three months, and had it increased to six. When this practice, for which the Government were not technically responsible, was brought before the House of Commons, Mr. Balfour suggested that the County Court Judges had been provoked to a novel procedure by "violent and monstrous attacks" made upon the Resident Magistrates, not by the appellants, but in the Irish and English Press. A less happy defence was seldom made. It not only showed that the Chief Secretary's notions of justice were defective and peculiar. It also fostered the popular idea that this sudden and simultaneous action of several Judges had been previously arranged with the authorities at Dublin Castle. The Crimes Act, being in restraint of liberty, should have been administered with the nicest care, and with the most scrupulous regard for the rights of accused persons. But the Resident Magistrates were neither trained nor accustomed to determine delicate points of law. Their methods

Increase of sentences on appeal.

April 24.

The Resident Magistrates.

1888. were rough and ready. One of them reported to
May 14. the Speaker that Mr. Dillon had been convicted of taking part in the Plan of Campaign. The Plan of Campaign had been judicially described as a criminal combination. At the same time it is desirable that a legal document certifying a conviction should specify with technical accuracy the nature of the offence, and there was ground for Sir William Harcourt's sarcastic remark that the magistrates would soon think it enough to say, "We have got hold of an Irish Member, and we have put him in prison." The magisterial errors, however, were not all matters of form. Four shopkeepers in the town of Killeagh were prosecuted for conspiracy not to deal with members of the Royal Irish Constabulary. They were sent to prison, and the magistrates, holding that their own law was unimpeachable, refused to state a case. Counsel then applied to the High Court for a habeas-corpus with some-
June 20. what startling results. Chief Baron Palles, a great and famous lawyer, who had not the smallest sympathy with any kind of Nationalism, said that there was no evidence of conspiracy against any of the prisoners. One of them had indeed been himself intimidated. But that did not prove that he had intimidated others. The magistrates had mistaken the injured party for the person who was doing the wrongful act. Baron Dowse, in concurring, observed that he never could understand the minds of local justices, or how they brought their minds to bear upon the facts before them. As for refusing to state a case, how could a Resident Magistrate state a case? He might as well be asked to write a Greek ode. He would have to be made over again before he could do it. When these facetious remarks were made, one of the four men, the intimidated one, had served the whole of his term, and the other three had undergone more

than half their punishment. The same day Mr. Dillon's sentence of six months for planning and campaigning was confirmed at Dundalk. He was accompanied in Court by an English Privy Councillor, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, and Lord Rosebery, speaking in England the day after, exclaimed, "I greatly doubt whether Mr. Dillon would exchange his dungeon for any palace in the land." Lord Rosebery was not given to random rhetoric, and the indignation that he expressed was felt by a great many people who had never yet voted for Home Rule. They saw that Mr. Dillon, mistaken as his methods might be, was patriotic, unselfish, and high-minded. 1888.

Monsignor Persico.

The cause of the Government was rather losing than gaining ground in England and Scotland when in Ireland a strange ally came to their aid. Hitherto they had chiefly depended upon the Protestant garrison of Ulster, and the Protestants of Belfast are wont to state their opinion of the Holy Father in no very flattering terms. But there is no maxim more thoroughly political than "any port in a storm," and Ministers had learned from their Liberal predecessors that help might come from the Vatican. Most English and some Irish Catholics were staunch Unionists. The Pope's attention was directed to the lawless conduct of his Irish children, especially to their repudiation of contracts with landlords. In the summer of 1887 he sent a trusted envoy to Ireland, Monsignor Persico, who made inquiries about the doings of the National League. The consequence of his mission was that a Papal Rescript issued in April 1888 condemned boycotting and the Plan of Campaign. If the Pope had stopped there, he might have put the League in a difficult position. But he proceeded unwisely to give his reasons. He said, for instance, that to break voluntary contracts

The Papal Rescript.

1888. was unlawful, and that the funds required for the campaign had been collected by extortion. Mr.
April 28. Dillon at once denied that the contracts were voluntary, and that the money had been extorted.
May 8. Mr. Parnell drily remarked that as he was not a Catholic, it was no business of his, and forty of his Catholic colleagues, meeting in Dublin, flatly declined to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Holy See in political matters. The Pope had been misinformed, he did not know the facts, and his conclusions, being drawn from erroneous premises, were themselves unsound. This manifesto of independence, which rather shocked the Bishops, was the last thing the Vatican had desired to elicit. But the Plan of Campaign had done its work, and a moral defence of boycotting would have been very difficult to frame. The nearest approach to such an apology had been made by Lord Salisbury at Newport in the month of October 1885.

In the summer of 1888 Mr. Parnell also received assistance from an unexpected quarter. A young
Cecil Rhodes. Englishman, Cecil John Rhodes, who went out to South Africa for the benefit of his health after leaving Oxford, had made a large fortune in the Diamond Fields of Cape Colony, and was generally known as the Diamond King. He did not value money for its own sake, and he was bent upon using his vast wealth for promoting the cause of Imperial Federation. Regarding the Home Rule Bill of 1886 from this point of view, he considered the exclusion of the Irish Members from Westminster as a radical defect in the measure. Otherwise he thought that Home Rule, which he called Local Government, would further his own idea of an imperial assembly representing all parts of the
Rhodes and Parnell. Queen's dominions. Holding these opinions, he offered ten thousand pounds to Mr. Parnell for the advancement of the cause on condition that the

Nationalists would insist upon remaining in the House of Commons. Parnell, with whom Rhodes had a personal interview at the Westminster Palace Hotel in June, said, then as always, that he had no strong feeling, one way or the other. The question was for Mr. Gladstone, not for him, to decide. As a matter of fact, Mr. Gladstone had so far given up exclusion as to agree that it should be indefinitely postponed, and therefore Mr. Parnell had no difficulty in giving the required assurance. The subscription was not really a large one for Mr. Rhodes, and he had schemes in his mind which might conceivably depend upon a smaller preponderance than eighty-five votes in the House of Commons. There was, however, nothing discreditable to either side in the arrangement, which, though made in private, was almost immediately published in the newspapers. While few Colonists took much interest in the matter, colonial opinion, like American, was generally favourable to Home Rule for Ireland. 1888. July 9.

The chief opponent of Home Rule in the English press continued, and republished in a small red volume, its articles upon the alleged connection between Parnellism and crime. In the month of November 1887, an Irishman who had sat in the Parliament of 1880 as a follower of Mr. Parnell, issued a writ against the *Times* for libel, claiming the modest damages of fifty thousand pounds. He declined to go into the witness-box, the mention of his name in the articles was almost accidental, and the jury, as a matter of course, found a verdict for the defendants. That, however, though the inevitable conclusion, was not the important point in the case. Law officers were still permitted to take private practice, and the leading counsel for the *Times* was the Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster. The defence of July 6. O'Donnell v. Walter.

1888. his clients in their pleadings was an alternative one. First they said that the libels did not apply to the plaintiff; secondly that they were true in substance and in fact. As the plaintiff had been named, the Chief Justice, Lord Coleridge, declined to stop the case, and this gave the Attorney-General an opportunity of which he fully availed himself. In a speech which occupied a couple of days he repeated and enforced the whole of the charges made by the *Times* against Mr. Parnell and his principal colleagues. There he stopped. Not one fragment of evidence did he produce. None was required, for he got his verdict. He seems to have held the peculiar view that it was fair to make, though it would be unfair to prove, the most serious charges against Irish Nationalists and their chief. He read in Court several letters purporting to be Parnell's, and of these two, besides the one already published, implied connection with crime. The former, dated the 9th of January 1882, when Parnell was in Kilmainham, ran as follows:—

More Parnell letters.

> Dear E.—What are these fellows waiting for? This inaction is inexcusable; our best men are in prison and nothing is being done. Let there be an end of this hesitency. Prompt action is called for. You undertook to make it hot for old Forster and Co. Let us have some evidence of your power to do so. My health is good, thanks.—Yours very truly,
>
> CHARLES S. PARNELL.

The second, written six weeks after the murders in the Phœnix Park, began:—

> "Dear Sir." . . . "I am sure," it went on, "you will feel that I could not appear in Parliament in face of this thing unless I condemned it. Our position there is always difficult to maintain; it would be untenable but for the course we took. That is the truth. I can say no more."

Four other letters were read, also purporting to come from Parnell. But they were quite trivial, and

would have been wholly unimportant if the word likelihood in one of them had not been spelt likelehood. 1888.

The effect produced by these letters was very different from the excitement of the previous year. In the first document there was something plausible. It was at least easy to conceive the frame of mind in which such words might have been written. Dread of assassination has affected the strongest minds. But the most craven victim of desperados more wicked than himself does not multiply evidence which would put him in the hands of his correspondent, nor play with his own neck when he is in gaol. The letter written from Kilmainham was in terms an incitement to murder, for the suggestion that it alluded to action in the House of Commons was childish. Those who knew anything of Mr. Parnell were aware that "to make it hot" was not one of the phrases in his dry and formal vocabulary. The misspelt words, which really contained the clue to the mystery, were most uncharacteristic. For though Parnell was no great scholar, he had had a good education, and as a matter of fact, well known to his friends, orthography was an art on which he laid great stress. It began to look as if some practical joker had been emboldened by success to try how much more his dupes would stand.

Conduct of the Attorney General.

A question of considerable interest to the public was raised by the conduct of the Attorney-General. The privileges of counsel are unlimited. They can take away any one's character, and he has no redress. The interests of their clients are held to override everything, and of those interests they are the sole guardians. Mr. Parnell had nothing to do with the action against the *Times*. He was not, and could not be, represented in it. The real defence of the *Times*, the defence upon which its

1888. conductors relied, was that the wrong man had brought the action. Such being the case, how could the Attorney-General be justified in reading documents unnecessary to sustain his plea, with the apparent object of attacking persons who were not before the Court at all? The plaintiff, it was said, had forced this line upon the Attorney-General. But that hardly seemed a sufficient excuse for the Leader of the Bar, and the first Law Officer of the Crown. He must have supposed that he was serving the interests of his clients, though it was hard to see how. For though he had asserted much, he had proved nothing, and it was the plaintiff who had won his case for him by losing his own. One thing he said excited as much comment as the letters themselves. On no consideration, not even to get a verdict and escape the payment of damages, would the conductors of the *Times* expose men to assassination by giving up their informants. The names of those who had supplied them with documentary evidence would remain a secret.

Whether such reticence could have been preserved if the case had been tried out is a question which was never solved. Absurd as the action was, it led to consequences of the gravest kind. This time Mr. Parnell had no legal redress. But
July 7. the day after the verdict he made a personal statement in the House, and denied the authenticity of the letters attributed to him. Of the most important, the assassination letter, he said, "I never wrote
Parnell's repudiation. it, I never signed it, I never directed it to be written, I never authorised it to be written, I never saw it." He afterwards weakened the effect of his denial by entering into argument. But the denial itself was explicit, and in the case of an English Member would have been generally believed. The veracity of Mr. Parnell, however, had become a

party question, and belief was almost confined to his own side of the House. The *Times* treated his statement with contemptuous incredulity, and asked why he had not brought an action before. The Government again refused a Select Committee, though Mr. Parnell himself suggested that all Irish Members should be excluded from it, and though the House could have compelled the production of witnesses. On this occasion they offered through Mr. Smith an alternative. If Mr. Parnell would agree, they would bring in a Bill empowering a Commission, consisting wholly or mainly of Judges, "to inquire into the allegations, and charges made against Members of Parliament by the defendants in the recent action." This proposal was accepted by Mr. Parnell and his friends in lieu of the Parliamentary Committee which they would have preferred. 1888. The Government's offer.

At this point the Government revoked. Instead of following suit, and putting upon the notice-paper the terms of Mr. Smith's declaration, which was a written one, they altered it by inserting "and other persons" after Members of Parliament. The effect of these words was enormous. It converted an inquiry about definite charges made against known men into a roving examination of Irish politics since the establishment of the Land League. The original question whether a Select Committee should be appointed to ascertain the origin of Mr. Parnell's alleged letter was peculiarly one for the House of Commons, to whom the Government might well have left it. The question raised by Mr. Smith's notice was one of the gravest constitutional issues ever discussed at Westminster. Should a Commission clothed with statutory powers be nominated by Parliament to judge between Great Britain and Ireland? To such vast magnitude had the controversy grown between the 12th Its alteration. The constitutional issue.

1888. and 16th of July. Upon an innovation so tremendous the Leaders of the Liberal party, Mr. Gladstone in particular, might have been expected to form and express a definite policy of their own. Unfortunately, they were divided in opinion.[1] Mr. Gladstone was unwilling to take a course which might look like shirking publicity. He perhaps realised better than some of his colleagues how gravely Mr. Parnell had damaged his reputation by not suing the *Times* in 1887. At all events the first reading of the Bill was taken after midnight without a division. Even against the second reading a week later the Opposition did not, as they ought to have done, divide. They allowed themselves to be guided by Mr. Parnell, who was once more for accepting any inquiry as better than none. So far as his own personal character and honour were concerned, he was quite right, though rather belated in his action. But the Liberal party should have been more faithful guardians of the Constitution, and should have done their best to protect it against this novel form of attainder. They would not, however, have succeeded. By this time the Government, probably misconstruing Mr. Parnell's vacillation, had made up their minds to force the Bill upon the Irish Chief, whether he liked it or not. Mr. Smith had consulted, with doubtful propriety, his "old friend" Mr. Walter, the principal proprietor of the *Times*, who was convinced that Parnellism would be crushed by exposure.

Liberal dissensions.

Parnell's acceptance.

The Commissioners.

The Commission consisted of three English Judges. The President, Sir James Hannen, was a highly accomplished and distinguished jurist. The other two were Judges of the ordinary type. The personal objection made in Committee to one of them[2] was idle, and rested on mere gossip. But

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 398.
[2] Mr. Justice Day.

to suppose that these three gentlemen had no opinions about politics was a preposterous and fallacious absurdity. It was said, truly but irrelevantly, that they had never sat in Parliament, nor taken a prominent share in public life. But their politics were perfectly well known to the Lord Chancellor, who selected them, and within an hour after their names had been announced every Member of Parliament knew as much as the Lord Chancellor. Sir James Hannen was a Liberal Unionist. His colleagues were Conservatives. Unless they were very unlike the rest of mankind, their political predilections had been strengthened rather than weakened by the public silence which acceptance of judicial office imposes. In ordinary cases a Judge's politics are immaterial. Even in an election petition the stake is too small to count. It may have been accident that in the case of Hertford College[1] judgment was given for the plaintiff, a Nonconformist, by two Nonconformist Judges, and against him by four Churchmen. But the issue in 1888 was a large one, and few indeed were the individuals who did not care whether the National League was cleared or no. Impartiality, it must always be remembered, is not a matter of the will. No honest man is consciously partial. Few even of the bitterest partisans are consciously dishonest. On a question of pure fact, like the authenticity of the letters, a Judge would go by the evidence, and the evidence alone. By what would he go, by what could he go, when he had to decide the alleged injustice of the law which excused the Plan of Campaign? If laws are unjust, they must be altered by Parliament. A Judge, even sitting as a Commissioner, can hardly be expected to draw a distinction between one law and another. Yet the whole case for the National League, good or

1888.

Wide scope of the inquiry.

[1] See vol. iv. pp. 354-356.

1888. bad, was that it came to the protection of those whom the law did not protect. Mr. Parnell had very sensibly offered that the authenticity of the letters should go before a Committee without an Irish Member on it. To let three Englishmen determine an international dispute between England and Ireland was a very different thing indeed. But it was a thing upon which the Government were bent. Not only did they carry the Bill over the heads of the Irish Members. They forced it through the House of Commons by the same methods employed to close debate upon the Crimes Bill the year before, although on this occasion the plea of urgency could not with any show of reason be set up. The Bill came to the House of Lords early in August, and that House, according to the theory of the Constitution, should have brought it to a speedy end. It was what the Romans called a *privilegium*, the precise opposite of what we mean by privilege, a special law directed against individuals obnoxious to the majority. Lord Herschell, in a speech which for judicial weight and gravity has seldom been surpassed, implored the Peers to consider how dangerous was the precedent they were making in the confusion of judges with politicians, of legislators with administrators of the law. Scarcely any other man would have been capable of so completely detaching himself from the passion and excitement of the hour. It was a speech for posterity, and for the historian. Its immediate effect in the place where Lord Herschell delivered it was nothing at all. No serious attempt was made to answer it, but against any measure introduced by a Conservative Government Liberals had ceased to divide the House of Lords. The Irish Members and their Irish supporters were sent before a tribunal nominated by their political opponents to meet charges and allegations which

Lord Herschell's protest.

the conductors of a great English newspaper had loosely and rhetorically framed. It is true that the court had no power to inflict any legal penalty. But most Unionists, though by no means all, hoped and believed that its findings would be fatal to the cause of Home Rule. 1888.

The work of the Commission did not begin till the 22nd of October 1888, and lasted for thirteen months, exclusive of adjournments. The Attorney-General, with Sir Henry James and others, again appeared for the *Times*. The leading counsel for the Irish Members was their countryman, Sir Charles Russell, and he vainly attempted to grapple at once with the letters. The Attorney-General was allowed to take his own course, and he called a very large number of Irish witnesses to prove the connection of the League with outrages. An immense amount of speeches, which the Judges had already seen, were read in court as evidence of conspiracy to boycott. Nothing new was proved, nothing old was explained, and the inquiry, like Robespierre's Être Suprême, began to be a bore. The Parnell Commission.

Meanwhile the House of Commons was more usefully employed in passing another Land Purchase Bill. For this purpose, and to pass the Estimates, it sat from the beginning of November till Christmas Eve, much time having been wasted earlier in the year by a futile Bill to provide a new and salaried office of Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Ireland. The Bill was dropped on the sudden death of the still unsalaried Under-Secretary, Colonel King-Harman, and the Land Purchase Bill had to wait for the Parnell Commission Bill already described. The Land Bill, though opposed by Mr. Gladstone, offered little opportunity for attack. It simply renewed Lord Ashbourne's Act of 1885 by authorising the advance of another Another Irish Land Bill.

1888. five millions to tenant purchasers, making ten in all. Mr. Gladstone, who objected to bringing the State into direct pecuniary relations with the farming class in Ireland, may be said to have cut the ground from under his own feet when he described the Irish farmer as the best rent-payer in the world. His complaint that the Act of 1887 had not dealt with arrears was well founded, and abundantly justified by subsequent events. But it was a bad reason for not passing this particular Bill, and one or two Home Rulers who sat for British constituencies refused on this occasion to follow their Leader, holding that the Bill, though a small one, was both good in itself and also favourable to Home Rule. The debates on this innocent measure were enlivened by the simplicity of an Irish constable who, wanting to arrest an Irish Member, sent him his card, as though he were a constituent in search of an order. Light comedy plays so small a part in the history of Ireland that even this specimen of it may be worth preserving.

1889. Throughout the greater part of January 1889 the long procession of priests, peasants, policemen, land agents, land leaguers, and informers, filed through the Court of the Special Commission, while Judges and unoccupied counsel looked at each other and yawned. At last, in the early days of February, a more important personage appeared. His name was Beach, and he was a native of Colchester. He had passed, however, under the name of Major le Caron, he had betrayed the secrets of the Fenian organisation to the police, and he was, in plain English, a spy. The trade is not an attractive one, and Beach, or Le Caron, does not appear to have told the police anything of much importance. But he was acting for his country, his own life must have been in frequent danger, and he must

"Major le Caron."

have had nerves of steel. He certainly made one of the best witnesses ever seen in a court of justice, and he baffled even Sir Charles Russell in cross-examination. Although he was in the box for a week, and gave an account of his whole life, he proved nothing very germane to the matter except that Mr. Parnell had told him in April 1881 that only physical force could bring about the regeneration of Ireland. Mr. Parnell had no recollection of the interview, and had never held, he said, that opinion, though it had always been his object to avoid an open rupture with the Clan na Gael, which was a revolutionary brotherhood. For one thing, he wanted their money, and he would never have hesitated to replenish the coffers of the League because the source of the contributions was tainted with crime. Those who credited Parnell with a delicate moral scrupulosity were as far out in their estimate as those who charged him with complicity in murder. 1889.

It was not till the 14th of February that the Court, or rather the counsel for the *Times*, came to the letters. Then indeed the interest of the public was awakened with a vengeance. Now at last they were to learn what precautions were taken by the responsible conductors of the greatest journal in the world before committing themselves to the publication of documents so momentous. Mr. Macdonald, the manager of the *Times*, was candour itself. He had received the letters from the secretary of the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union. Asked whether he had made any inquiries about the persons to whom the letters were addressed, he said that he had not. Were there any envelopes with the letters? No. How could he account for that? He could not account for it. He had compared the signatures with some undoubted signatures of Mr. Parnell's, and they

The letters.

Mr. Macdonald.

1889. seemed to correspond, as it was not unlikely that they would, since, if not genuine, they were imitations. That was all he did before publishing the first letter on the 18th of April 1887. He thought the letters just the sort that Mr. Parnell would be likely to write. Judges, counsel, and spectators stared and gasped. This was not the temporary substitute for the acting sub-editor of the *Little Peddlington Gazette*. It was the manager of the *Times*, and he had paid more than two thousand pounds for the sort of letters that in his opinion Mr. Parnell would be likely to write. Then the Attorney-General wished to call adepts in handwriting. But, mercifully for the reputation of these gentlemen, the Judges interposed. They were becoming interested themselves. They wanted to get on with the case, and to find out whence the letters did really come. So the Secretary of the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union was called instead. When he mentioned the name of the man from whom he received the letters, the case, so far as they were concerned, was at an end.

Richard Pigott.

It was Richard Pigott. That "Dick Pigott," a man notorious in Dublin, had concocted these famous epistles the Nationalists had long suspected, and yet hardly dared to suppose. For where in the world was the man credulous enough to accept documents from such a source? Egan, however, to whom it was supposed that some of the letters were addressed, derived a conviction which almost amounted to certainty from the fact that Pigott had, in writing to him for money, made precisely the same mistakes in orthography as appeared behind the signature of Parnell. Pigott was a poor, broken-down hack, living from hand to mouth, and begging from any one likely to be taken in by plausible tales. Mr. Forster, when Chief Secretary for Ireland, was one of his innum-

erable victims, and even Mr. Forster had found him out at last. After discovering him to be a rogue, this kind-hearted man gave him, in January 1882, fifty pounds for a ticket to New York. But Pigott did not go to America. He remained in Ireland, labouring in his vocation as a mendicant. Sometimes he wrote threatening letters, as for instance to Egan, then Secretary of the Land League, in 1881. Egan told him to go about his business, which, if we lay stress upon the personal pronoun, we may say that he did. The man had no malice against any one. For a reasonable remuneration he would have written up or written down any cause or any person whatsoever. In the autumn of 1885 he received from the Loyal Irish and Patriotic Union the sum of sixty pounds for a pamphlet called *Parnellism Unmasked*. No one more urgently required the shelter of a mask than the anonymous author. Pigott's style was not much valued in Unionist circles, which could command the pens of Mr. Goldwin Smith and Professor Dicey. They told the wretched vagrant that evidence was required, evidence "connecting the Parnellite movement with the crime prevalent in the country." Pigott replied helplessly that there was none. "Oh, come," said the Secretary of the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union, "suppose I offered you a guinea a day and your travelling expenses." Pigott was destitute. He could hardly believe his ears. Was it possible? Cautiously feeling his way, he suggested that he might have to travel a good deal. Of course. That was quite understood. Nothing seemed to excite the suspicions of this amiable and ingenuous youth, sent by providence to assist him. Then Pigott closed with the offer, and for several months led a life of luxurious enjoyment, making trips to New York, to Lausanne, to Paris. What could be more

1889.

Pigott's travels.

1889. delightful while it lasted? But even his confiding employers, among whom was a former Whip of the Liberal party, would want something for their money in the end. So he deliberately forged the letters attributed to Parnell by the *Times*, and pretended to have bought them in Paris from conspirators who carried a black bag. No one saw, no one asked to see, either the bag or the conspirators. Pigott received from his paymasters five hundred pounds for the conspirators and a hundred guineas for himself. He was not under the painful necessity of separating the two sums. This was in July 1886. The letters were shown to Lord Hartington, who refused to meddle with the matter. Then in October they were submitted to the Manager of the *Times*. In March 1887 the series of articles on "Parnellism and Crime" began. In April appeared the first letter. The others were read to the Lord Chief Justice of England and a special jury in July 1888. In October, just as the Commissioners began their sittings, Pigott made a full confession to Parnell's solicitor, Mr. Lewis.[1] Next day he withdrew his confession, and on the 21st of February 1889 he entered the witness-box, prepared to brazen it out. He had forgotten his correspondence with Dr. Walsh, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, one of the most curious in the annals of roguery. Three days before the appearance of the first article on "Parnellism and Crime" Pigott wrote to Archbishop Walsh and warned him that a great danger threatened the Irish party. Statements, he said, were about to be published which would prove the complicity of Mr. Parnell himself and other Nationalist Leaders in the crime of murder. The disclosure would probably be followed by a public prosecution. He

Pigott and Archbishop Walsh.

March 7.

[1] Afterwards Sir George Lewis.

himself could alone avert this deadly peril, and as he believed the parties to be innocent he would gladly, for a consideration, lend his aid. The Archbishop's reply was unpromising. "It is well," he wrote, "that all such evidence as you refer to should be brought out into the light of day. I have such experience of how lies of the most circumstantial character have been told regarding the National cause, that I believe no statement regarding its leaders or advocates until I have had an opportunity of judging the statement for myself." If there were more Walshes in the world there would be fewer Pigotts. After skilfully inducing him to write the words "hesitency" and "likelehood" without a suspicion of his motive, Sir Charles Russell sprang upon Pigott his correspondence with the Archbishop and with Mr. Forster. The wretch collapsed, and the Court adjourned. 1889.

This was on Friday the 22nd of February, and the Judges did not sit again till Tuesday the 26th. The Court was thronged that morning with an eager and expectant audience. But Pigott, as might have been anticipated, did not appear again. On Saturday the 23rd he had renewed in Parnell's presence, and before his cold, contemptuous gaze, the confession he recanted before, and this confession was read in Court. The Attorney-General withdrew the letters, not admitting them in so many words to be forgeries, as beyond question they were, but using the carefully guarded phrase, "After the evidence which has been given we are not entitled to say that they are genuine." Mr. Parnell, however, was not cross-examined as to his statement on oath that they were all forged, and "Parnellism and Crime" was immediately recalled from circulation. After confessing his own crime Pigott left England for Spain, in the mistaken

Flight of Pigott.

1889. belief that there was no treaty of extradition between the two countries. When detectives followed him to his hotel in Madrid, he blew out his brains in his bedroom. Heavy indeed must have been the consciences of those who lured him to his doom.

March 1. His suicide.

Although the Judges declined to make a separate report on the letters, the proof of their forgery deprived the proceedings of all popular interest. Mr. Parnell, not much to his apparent satisfaction, became a hero with English Liberals, and when he entered the House of Commons after his triumph they rose in his honour. There were many of them who thought that after Pigott's confession counsel for the Irishmen should have withdrawn from the case, which had lost all semblance of novelty and freshness. Sir Charles Russell, however, decided otherwise. That remarkable man was a lawyer only by accident, though his knowledge of the law was accurate and sound. He was an intensely patriotic Irishman, and the crowning moment of his life had come. He was about to vindicate before the civilised world the cause of his country and her grievances against England. A great speech he made. He spoke for seven days with powerful, vigorous, at times splendid, eloquence. A jury might have been carried away. Public opinion was not indifferent to the great advocate pleading for the land of his birth. But his rhetoric had about as much effect upon the three Judges as it had upon the cushions of their seats. After all, Sir Charles Russell had only spoken for seven days, and Sir Henry James subsequently spoke on the other side for twelve. The Judges had not come there to hear speeches. The speeches of counsel are not evidence. Sir Charles Russell, having delivered his soul, did at last withdraw when the Commission refused to order

Speech of Sir Charles Russell.

that the books of the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union should be produced. On the other hand, the books of the Land League, for which they did send, were not all forthcoming. Some of them may have been lost. But that the League never made payments for illegal purposes it would be rash to assume. Mr. Parnell was subjected by the Attorney-General to a long cross-examination, in the course of which he made a singularly unfortunate reply. The cross-examination was not conducted with much skill, and had wandered into a political argument of small interest, when Parnell referred to the influence of the Land League in suppressing secret societies. "Then why, sir," snapped counsel, "did you tell the House of Commons on the 7th of January 1881 that secret societies had ceased to exist in Ireland?" The obvious answer was, "Because the Land League had done its work." The actual answer was very different. "It is possible," said Parnell coolly, "that I was endeavouring to mislead the House of Commons on that occasion." Sir Richard Webster, working blindly, had, as the Americans say, struck oil. Nothing came of it, for the Judges found that Parnell had not been misleading the House at all. But the incident was unfavourable to the Irish cause, and not agreeable to leading Liberals like Lord Spencer, who had just shaken hands in public with Parnell at a dinner of the Eighty Club. Of how many Ministers would a political opponent say that they had never misled the House of Commons? It is Lord Althorp's chief title to fame that he never did. But in the affairs of life a measure of decency is required. It was Parnell's callousness, his ostentatious indifference to English opinion, that marred and ruined his career. He never to the last understood this himself. When he left the witness-box that day he said calmly to a legal friend, "The bowling was

1889.

Parnell's slip.

April 30.

1889. rather wide." "Then why did you hit your own wicket down?" was the caustic reply.

Report of the Commission.

On the 13th of February 1890 the Report of the Parnell Commission, as Lord Herschell truly predicted that it would be called, was laid before both Houses by command of the Queen. On every new point, every point first raised by the *Times*, it amounted to an acquittal. The Commissioners found, as a matter of course, that the letters were forgeries. Besides the letters, three personal charges had been brought against Mr. Parnell. First, it was said that at the time of his release from Kilmainham he offered to employ two men in putting down outrages, because he knew them to have been concerned in getting outrages up. This was not perhaps a very serious accusation, and the Commissioners found that it had not been proved. Secondly, it had been imputed to Parnell that he "was intimate with the leading Invincibles, that he probably learned from them what they were about when he was released on *parole* in April 1882, and that he recognised the Phœnix Park murders as their handiwork." A graver insinuation than this could hardly be conceived. The Judges said not merely that it was untrue, but that there was no foundation for it.

Personal acquittal of Parnell.

Thirdly, Parnell was accused of having, by a timely remittance, enabled a murderer to escape from justice. The Judges held that he had done nothing of the kind. Mr. Parnell was thus personally acquitted on all the charges made against him alone.

General condemnation of the respondents.

The respondents generally were found not to have conspired for the establishment of Irish independence, though a few of them had co-operated with Mr. Davitt, the founder of the Land League, for that purpose. They had incited to intimidation, of which the consequence was outrage, but not to any other crime. They

had also disseminated copies of the *Irish World* and other newspapers of a seditious and criminal character. Crime and outrage they had in good faith denounced. They "did not denounce the system which led to crime and outrage, but persisted in it with knowledge of its effect." This is the most damning sentence in the Report, and it had, like all the other hostile paragraphs, been anticipated by Mr. Forster in 1883.[1] That speech was fully described in a previous volume. It had never been answered, because it was unanswerable. But grave as its political and moral effect was, it did not prevent English statesmen of the most scrupulous honour from associating with the leaders of the Irish revolution. It did not restrain Lord Carnarvon, as high-minded a man as ever lived, from consulting Mr. Parnell officially on Irish politics with the full approbation of Lord Salisbury, who in private life was a model of all the virtues. Revolutions, as has been said, are not made with rose-water, and Austrian Judges would have found much to censure in the proceedings of the illustrious Cavour. When the Commissioners, going to the very edge of the Commission, expressed their opinion that the rejection of the Disturbance Bill by the Lords in 1880 did not increase the agrarian crime of Ireland, and that the Land Act of 1881 did not diminish it, every Member of Parliament felt that he knew as much about politics as any Judge on the Bench. And Parliament has at least one advantage which Judges have not. To a Judge, even when he sits as a Commissioner, all laws are good and equally good. To repeal bad laws, to alter imperfect laws, is the duty of a statesman. The defence for the Land League and for the National League, was that unjust laws could, at least in

1889.

Political aspect of the Report.

[1] See vol. iv. pp. 295-297.

1889. Ireland, only be amended by agitation. No Judge on the Bench could possibly decide such a point as that, because he could not even listen to a plea which impugned, openly and boldly, the law of the land. Such an issue could only be determined by the Legislature, or by the electors of the United Kingdom.

The Report in Parliament.

No action was taken by Parliament in consequence of this Report, except that the Leaders of both Houses proposed and carried votes of thanks to the Commissioners, who undoubtedly deserved them. For their labours had been more tedious, if not more onerous, than judicial duties of the usual type, and in their treatment of specific charges against individuals they had shown absolute impartiality. But when the question entered the great political arena, parties fell into their accustomed places. Mr. Gladstone, in a speech of singular power and beauty, moved an amendment to the formal resolution, in which he asked the House of Commons to protest against the wrong, suffering, and loss endured by the victims of flagrant iniquity. When, with the utmost solemnity, and in the deepest tones of his organ voice, he entreated each one of his hearers "to give such a judgment as would bear the scrutiny of the heart and of the conscience of every man when he betook himself to his chamber and was still," the effect was for the moment profound. There was no obvious reason why Ministers should not accept the amendment. They always protested that they had nothing to do with the *Times*, and the Lord Chancellor[1] had even gone so far as to say in the House of Lords that he hoped the defendants would be acquitted. Whatever might be thought of the Report as a whole, nobody could deny that Mr. Parnell had been personally cleared, or that the false accusations

March 3-10, 1890.

Gladstone's appeal.

[1] Lord Halsbury.

made against him had cost him many thousands of pounds. The amendment did not censure the Government, who had small reason to thank their friends in the press. The question whether the Leader of a great party acted with murderers in private while he denounced them in public was one of fact, not of opinion, and it had been authoritatively answered in the negative. The House of Commons might, one would have thought, rejoice unanimously at such a conclusion. Yet Members voted for the resolution, or for the amendment, according as they had been returned to support Lord Salisbury or Mr. Gladstone. Even Mr. Chamberlain, who said in the debates on the Commission Bill that if the letters were disproved the public would care very little about the rest of the case, supported the Government now. Lord Randolph Churchill, on the other hand, attacked both the appointment of the Commission and the acceptance of its Report. The Prime Minister made no apology for having accused both Mr. Parnell and Mr. Gladstone of complicity with murderers, though his accusation was founded upon the first forged letter alone. Lord Salisbury always seemed to have two standards. In private punctiliously honourable, he used in public controversy the most convenient weapons, and simply dropped them when they were no longer available for his purpose. He might from the first have treated the forged letters with disdain, and have left the sole responsibility for publishing them with the *Times*. He had chosen, as we have seen, to take advantage of the first upon the day that it appeared, and to bring odious charges on the strength of it against an eminent statesman whose life was as stainless as his own. Now that the letters were shown to be spurious, he said they were of no consequence, except as proofs that one Nationalist

1889.

Churchill's attack.

Salisbury's attitude.

1889. could forge the signature of another.[1] To call the author of *Parnellism Unmasked* a Nationalist was a singular flight of rhetoric. But it pales before the audacity of suggesting that whether Pigott forged the signature of Parnell, or Parnell forged the signature of Pigott, was an insignificant question of detail.

Private practice of law officers.

A collateral issue of some importance was virtually, though not immediately, settled by these debates. The position of the Attorney-General was felt to be a false one. That the first Law Officer of the Crown, receiving an annual salary voted by Parliament, should be at the disposal of any litigant who could afford to pay for his services, was inconvenient and irregular. But, like other anomalies, it might have continued for an indefinite period if Sir Richard Webster had not accepted a brief for the *Times* in the Court of the Parnell Commission. The case was in the nature of a State Trial, and yet the Attorney-General appeared for a newspaper, not for the Crown. When the Commission Bill was before the House of Commons, Sir Richard Webster told the House that he should be able to prove the authenticity of the forged letters. That he should say so in Court was natural enough. There he spoke from instructions. In Parliament he could only speak for himself, and, as Mr. Whitbread reminded him, they were "all equal there." The personal motives of the Attorney-General were not impugned, and so clannish is the great profession of the law, that

March 22, 1889.

when Sir William Harcourt moved to reduce his salary, only one practising barrister[2] voted with him. Nevertheless the system by which the Attorney- and Solicitor-General were paid partly by private litigants, and partly from the public purse, had received a mortal blow.

[1] See his speech at Watford, *Times*, 20th March 1889.
[2] Mr. Coleridge, son of the Lord Chief Justice.

After the flight of Pigott Sir Charles Russell exclaimed with passion that there was a "foul conspiracy" yet to be discovered. No proof of such a conspiracy was forthcoming. On the other hand, the campaign of calumny which ended in the miserable suicide at Madrid was marked by a blundering fatuity which the least subtle of conspirators would have avoided. The injury to the *Times*, though not permanent, was extremely serious, and the pecuniary loss to its proprietors was immense. Early in 1890 Mr. Parnell brought the action which he might have brought in 1887, and recovered five thousand pounds by consent. But that, of course, was a very small part of what its attacks upon Parnellism cost the *Times*, and this fact alone should have saved the conductors of that journal from any imputation of dishonesty. They were very easily taken in, but they were the deceived, not the deceivers. Mr. Macdonald, the manager, whose extraordinary evidence has been already described, died before the presentation of the Report. The chief proprietor of the paper, the third John Walter in direct descent, had sat for many years in the House of Commons, and was well known to distinguished statesmen on both sides of politics. Although he had not a sympathetic temperament, nor an enlarged understanding, his integrity was never called in question. He was a victim of that "craving credulity" which Mr. Disraeli attributed to a sceptical age. He was also an example and a warning to fortify the old proverb that a shoemaker should stick to his last. It is the business of a newspaper to furnish early and accurate information of events at home and abroad; to comment upon them for the amusement and instruction of its readers; to criticise books and plays; to support a definite set of political and social opinions, or to show the weak points in them all. Many other

1889.

Parnell's action.

The limits of journalism.

1889. legitimate functions of journalism might be suggested. But to get up a case against the personal characters of political opponents by means of spies, informers, partisans, and hacks is not journalism, and does not pay. If Mr. Parnell had been connected with murder, Lord Spencer would have found it out. For he had at his command from May 1882 to June 1885 real detectives who knew their business, and brought to justice one Invincible after another. If they had been set to write leading articles in the *Times*, the result would not have been satisfactory.

Effect of the Report.

The Report of the Judges was favourable to Home Rule, because it disappointed expectations which should never have been raised. But upon sober, sensible Unionists who expected nothing it had no influence at all. They never thought Mr. Parnell a melodramatic villain, who concocted murderous conspiracies on the platform of Willesden Junction, a place fitter for the sale of *Parnellism and Crime*. They had seen with amazement the Prime Minister of England rush headlong to the conclusion that a letter must be genuine because it was printed in the *Times*. They had always condemned the League, and denied the fitness of the Irish people for self-government, because the leaders of Irish opinion defended, and even counselled, boycotting and intimidation. They read the Report, and they found that they were right. Why should they change their opinions because foolish libels had been ignominiously exposed? Many of them had been Liberals all their lives. But they did not associate Liberalism with revolution, or believe that withholding from obnoxious persons the necessaries of life was a lawful method of turning them from the errors of their ways. They supported Mr. Balfour, because with rigid and unflinching severity he upheld the letter of the law. The

immediate difficulty in Ireland was agrarian. 1889.
Arrears of rent increased and led to evictions. Evictions could only be carried out by armed force, and it was for preaching resistance to that force, or organising the intimidation of land-grabbers, that Irish Members were sent to prison. One of them was condemned to six months' hard labour for publishing reports of meetings held by "suppressed" Dec. 31, 1888.
branches of the National League. The case of Mr. O'Brien, however, produced the most effect in England, and was not wholly favourable to the Government. Mr. O'Brien was arrested at Man- Jan. 24, 1889.
chester after making a speech to the constituents of Mr. Jacob Bright. In Clonmel Gaol he once Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Balfour.
more refused to wear the prison clothes, and his beard was removed against his will. Mr. Balfour found incidents of this kind an unfailing source of amusement. But his ideas of humour were not shared by all his supporters, and Mr. O'Brien's clothes were ultimately given back to him. Petty indignities of this kind, which were not afterwards inflicted upon political prisoners, enhanced Mr. O'Brien's popularity without helping to tranquillise Ireland. On the 3rd of February 1889 there occurred one of the most shocking events in Mr. Murder of Inspector Martin.
Balfour's tenure of office. A warrant had been issued under the Crimes Act against Father McFadden, the parish priest of Gweedore. With almost incredible folly the District Inspector, an Englishman named Martin, determined to execute it on Sunday morning as the priest left chapel after celebrating Mass. McFadden ran to his house pursued by the Inspector, who caught him by the throat. This so much infuriated the Catholic crowd that they stoned and beat Martin to death. A brutal and barbarous murder. But to a Catholic the person of a priest is sacred, and to arrest in the face of his congregation a clergyman who has just

1889. performed the most solemn rites of their common faith is hardly the act of a sane administration. If Mr. Balfour had been as discreet as he was firm, this murder would not have been committed, and Mr. O'Brien's clothes would never have been a subject of popular discussion.

Death of John Bright.

While Ireland was in this disturbed and excited condition, one of her oldest friends in England passed away. John Bright, who died at Rochdale on the 27th of March 1889, aged seventy-eight, had stood up for Ireland time after time in the House of Commons, when to say a word on her behalf was decried as mischievous faction. After he became himself responsible for a Coercion Bill in 1881, the Nationalists assailed him with an ungrateful and unbecoming acrimony, which he was not quite great enough to forgive. From that date he always spoke of them as the "rebel party," and lost no opportunity of denouncing them. When Mr. Gladstone adopted Home Rule, Mr. Bright reluctantly broke away from the statesman he most admired, and became, more to his bewilderment than to his satisfaction, the idol of the Tories. He was perfectly consistent, for never throughout his public career had he admitted the practical possibility of more than one Parliament in the United Kingdom. His death was equally mourned by Liberals and Conservatives, for he had come to be regarded simply as an illustrious Englishman. His very faults were English, including a dogged resolution which might almost be called obstinacy, and an extreme unwillingness to admit that he had ever been in the wrong. No man had done more to procure the defeat of Mr. Gladstone's Government at the General Election of 1886. After that he said little, and rarely attended the House. As an orator many critics put him above Gladstone, and he had no other rival. His letters were inferior

only to his speeches, and there were occasions when a few lines from him appealed to the working classes like the sound of a trumpet. But precious as were his services to Parliamentary Reform at one end of his life, and to Parliamentary Unionism at the other, he was in nothing braver or more strenuous than in his opposition to the Crimean War. 1889.

Lord Londonderry resigned the Irish Viceroyalty in the course of this spring, having held it not quite three years. His political sympathies were with the Orangemen of Ulster, and Mr. Balfour could have had no more loyal colleague. But place without power is not attractive to an energetic man in the prime of life, and Lord Londonderry, besides his Irish estates, had property of immense value in the north of England. A number of leading Unionists, chiefly Irish, the Marquess of Waterford, head of the Beresfords, being the most prominent, took the opportunity to urge the abolition of the Viceroyalty, which Lord John Russell had proposed in 1850.[1] But when they approached the Prime Minister they met with no encouragement. He told them that what they asked was impossible, and that the Earl of Zetland had already been appointed. Few people in Ireland knew anything, good or bad, of Lord Zetland, the puppet whose strings Mr. Balfour was to pull. On the point of policy the Deputation had a much stronger case than Lord Salisbury was willing to acknowledge. There was no Lord-Lieutenant of Scotland, and an independent Secretary for Ireland, whether he were a Secretary of State or not, would have meant the strongest possible negation of Home Rule. Change in the Irish Viceroyalty. May 29.

At the close of the year 1889 Mr. Parnell paid a brief visit to Hawarden, and discussed with Mr. Gladstone a variety of possible changes in the next Dec. 18-19. Parnell at Hawarden.

[1] See vol. i. pp. 159-160.

1889. Home Rule Bill. The by-elections were beginning to go against the Government, and Mr. Balfour's Irish policy seemed to be less popular than before.

Relaxation of prison rules.

Little disposed as he was to make concession, the Chief Secretary had been driven to alter the prison rules by giving the local authorities the power of relaxing them. This was intended to affect, and did affect, political prisoners without mentioning them. Their treatment did not meet with public approval, and Mr. Balfour was accused of wrecking his party. At Hawarden no formal agreement was reached. Mr. Gladstone had made up his mind to the retention of the Irish Members, and he wished to discuss with the Irish Leader the consequent modifications which would be involved. The result was so far satisfactory that Mr. Parnell, speaking at Liverpool to an Irish audience the day he left Mr. Gladstone's house, called upon his countrymen to rally round the "grand old Leader." "My countrymen, rejoice," he added, "for we are on the safe path to our legitimate freedom, and our future prosperity." Before the end of the year it was announced that Captain O'Shea[1] had filed a petition for divorce from his wife, and had named Mr. Parnell as co-respondent.

[1] See vol. iv. pp. 231-233.

CHAPTER VII

THE FALL OF PARNELL

THE Report of the Parnell Commission seemed to be a turning point in the history of Ireland, and Home Rule appeared to have come within the range of practical politics. That there was no logical connection between the document and the policy has been already shown. Because Mr. Parnell's complicity with assassins, and the conspiracy of the National League with the Invincibles, had been disproved, it did not follow either that Ireland was fit for self-government, or that Irish autonomy would be favourable to the interests of Great Britain. The situation really remained as it was at the beginning of 1887, and the moral responsibility of the League for boycotting, outrage, intimidation, was exactly what Mr. Gladstone, as well as Mr. Forster, had declared it to be. But what is logic in human affairs? Political passion had been so acutely roused by the forged letters, and all they were thought to imply, that public opinion swung round with their collapse, as if Mr. Parnell, or anybody else, must be either a murderer or a saint. In Ireland the battle raged as fiercely as ever, though the number of agrarian offences had slightly diminished, and the remedy of eviction was secured to the landlord who could afford it. Mr. Balfour had now been Chief Secretary for three years, in the course of which he had won a

1890.

Mr. Balfour's position.

1890. high reputation for ability, firmness, and courage. It was not in Ireland that his work had been done. His visits to the Chief Secretary's Lodge were short and far between, nor had he to encounter anything like the revolutionary violence which raged round Lord Spencer. But in England he had met his political antagonists with a promptitude and resource which they could not fail to respect. In the House of Commons he defended everything his subordinates did, so that they were seldom afraid to act boldly, whether circumstances required bold action or not. He himself represented a populous constituency of working men,[1] and on public platforms he did not shrink either from defence or from attack. Mr. Gladstone gave him frequent opportunities of scoring points. The physical and mental energy of the veteran statesman excited universal admiration. His eloquence and power were as wonderful as ever. But absorption in a single subject has its drawbacks, and Mr. Gladstone seemed to have lost for the time his sense of relative values. The most trifling blunder of a Resident Magistrate looked to him almost like a convulsion of nature. The Act of Union, passed by unscrupulous means under the stress and strain of a great European war, became in his eyes a monstrous and horrible crime, which half justified the worst excesses committed by Nationalists ninety years afterwards. Mr. Balfour, unaffected by eloquence, and contemptuous of enthusiasm, was just the man to pour cold water upon the fiery zeal of the intrepid agitator. His taste was by no means infallible, and for Mr. Gladstone's unique position he showed no respect at all. He corrected the Liberal Chief's inaccuracies, exposed his fallacies, and was never tired of contrasting his present admiration of Nationalism with his former attacks

[1] East Manchester.

upon it. Mr. Balfour was becoming the idol of his party, when the failure of the campaign against Parnellism and crime made the rank and file of Tory politicians ask themselves dubiously whether coercion paid. 1890.

The imprisonment of Irish Members began to pall. It seemed monotonous and futile. What was to be the end of it? Unionists in the House of Commons were heard to grumble. Organs of Unionism in the Press were critical and discontented. Lord Randolph Churchill murmured. Liberal Unionists in Parliament stood loyally by the Ministers whom they kept in office. Except Sir George Trevelyan, no prominent Unionist had returned to the Liberal party and adopted Home Rule. But the by-elections showed that in the constituencies it was otherwise. The Liberal polls increased to a degree which could only be explained by a gradual healing of the schism created in 1886. During the session of 1890 there was a fierce debate on the practice of "shadowing," which meant the constant accompaniment of suspected persons in Ireland by the police. A supporter of the Government who had held a commission in the navy denounced this method of espionage as "damnable," and Mr. Balfour for the first time showed signs of discouragement. Though utterly impervious to the abuse of his opponents, he was at times curiously sensitive to the criticism of his political friends, and he could not be unaware of the fact that he was accused of ruining his party. He could scarcely go back, however, and he went forward. Among the evictions with which the Irish landlords threatened their tenants in the spring of 1890 was one on the Ponsonby estates at Youghal, where the Plan of Campaign had been put in force. The owner was about to yield, when a landlords' association, organised by Mr. Smith-

The by-elections.

Shadowing.

1890. Barry, came to his assistance, and the process of ejectment was duly carried out. As a mark of indignation and sympathy, Mr. Smith-Barry's own tenants in Tipperary refused to pay their rents, and streets were built outside the town by public subscription to accommodate the evicted. The funds were insufficient, Mr. Smith-Barry was a rich man, and "New Tipperary" proved an expensive failure. It was, in short, an unwise business, reflecting little credit upon the judgment of Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien, who had got it up. If the Chief Secretary had done nothing, the Nationalist leaders would have suffered in authority and reputation. But on the very day when the first batch of tenants on the Ponsonby estates were turned out, Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien were arrested for their speeches at Tipperary. All risk of losing their popularity was at once gone. When they appeared at Tipperary Court House a week later, they were received with an enthusiasm which led the police to draw their truncheons. English visitors, however, were present, among them Mr. Morley, who had been travelling through the congested districts of Connemara. He advised the officer in charge of the constabulary to let the public into the court, where, as he afterwards told a Lancashire audience, they could not have been quieter if they had been in church. Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien were remanded. But when the court met again they were on their way to the United States, which they had previously arranged to visit. Their bail was of course estreated, and they were liable to re-arrest on their return. The English people, however, were getting restive, and an election held in Lancashire a few days afterwards resulted in the last Liberal victory of a considerable series.

New Tipperary.

Sept. 18.

Further arrests.

Oct. 10.

Then one of those strange events happened which baffle the calculations of the wisest, and

bring the counsels of the prudent to nought. 1890.
Parliament had been summoned for the 25th of November to make up for lost time, and especially to pass one more Irish Land Bill, which had been left over from the previous session. On Saturday the 15th of November the case of O'Shea *v.* O'Shea and Parnell came on for hearing. On Monday the Court pronounced a decree *nisi*, with costs against the co-respondent. The political consequences of this simple fact would be altogether beyond belief if they had not in sober truth occurred. Only three persons were really concerned in the matter, and they were the parties before the Court. The Judge had no choice in the decision he pronounced. Yet when he pronounced it, he destroyed the prospects of a great political party in England, and ruined for many years to come the cause of Home Rule in Ireland. Not the least surprising part of the case was the surprise it evoked. The action had been on the paper, in the defended list, it is true, for almost a year. Mr. Parnell was unmarried, and there had always been an element of mystery about his private life. He had no regular address, except the House of Commons, and he was known to have sometimes passed under fictitious names. He had often been absent from the House when his presence was particularly required. After the General Election of 1885 he had forced Captain O'Shea as a candidate upon the city of Galway, and very plain language about his motive for doing so had been used by some of his own followers. Still, it seems to have been supposed, by the few people who troubled themselves about the subject, that Parnell would leave the Divorce Court, as he had left the Commission Court, without a stain upon his character. To his friends he remarked vaguely that it would be "all right," and they took him to mean that he was unjustly accused. What

The Parnell divorce case.

1890. he apparently did mean was that he would be able to prove condonation, if not connivance, on the part of the husband. But when the time came he proved nothing at all. He was not represented by counsel, and took no part in the proceedings. The case was proved by the petitioner's witnesses, who were not cross-examined, and it is therefore unnecessary to accept certain ignominious details, on which the Prime Minister did not think it beneath him to cut jokes in the House of Lords. But as to the substantial truth of the charge there could be no doubt whatever.

When the *Times* was sued for libel in 1888, the difficulty was to understand why the action had been brought. When Captain O'Shea filed his petition in 1890, there were many who asked why he had not filed it before. So long ago as July 1881 he had challenged Parnell to fight a duel.[1] The conflict was averted by the unusual agency of the challenger's wife, and in 1882 O'Shea was the instrument of communication from Kilmainham to Downing Street. After he came out of Kilmainham Parnell was often absent from duty, and people began to talk. In January 1886 a vacancy occurred at Galway, and Parnell, as has been said, exerted all his influence to procure the return of O'Shea, who was regarded in Nationalist circles as that fatal thing in Irish politics, a Whig. This transaction was freely denounced as scandalous, and O'Shea justified his opponents by refusing to vote for the Home Rule Bill. Then he disappeared from public life, and since the autumn of 1886 Parnell's uncertain health was a sufficient excuse for the irregularity of his attendance at West-
Nov. 26. minster. But in the autumn of 1887 the *Times* announced that Mr. Parnell had been for some months living at Eltham, where the O'Sheas re-

[1] O'Brien's *Life of Parnell*, vol. ii. pp. 152-153.

sided, under the name of Preston. Captain O'Shea must have seen that paragraph, and yet he took no steps in consequence of it for more than two years. The evil genius of Ireland could not have chosen the time with more fatal and sinister malignity. Parliament was to meet in a few days after the decision of the Court, not for an adjourned sitting, but for a new session, and the Irish Nationalists would have, in accordance with practice, to elect their Chairman. The day after judgment had been delivered a meeting of the National League was held in Dublin, with Mr. John Redmond in the chair, at which a resolution of unabated confidence in Mr. Parnell was passed. Two days later a much larger and more representative gathering assembled in the Leinster Hall, and expressed the same sentiment in a stronger form. Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Healy supported it. Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien telegraphed their concurrence from the United States. That these hasty and generous expressions embodied the real opinion of the Irish people can hardly be supposed. There is no country in the world where a higher standard of sexual morality prevails. Mr. Parnell's colleagues were naturally grateful for his splendid services, and the Leinster Hall meeting would have made it easy for him to retire voluntarily, at least for a time, from an untenable position.

1890.

Meeting at Leinster Hall.

Meanwhile a still more important assembly came together in England. On the 21st and 22nd of November the annual conference of the National Liberal Federation was held at Sheffield. The divorce case was not mentioned in public. But two Liberal Leaders, Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Morley, who attended and spoke, were obliged to tell Mr. Gladstone on their return that these Liberal delegates from all parts of England were practically unanimous in refusing to support Home

The Sheffield Conference.

1890. Rule any longer if Mr. Parnell retained the lead of the Irish party. In the slang of the lobby and the street, this determination was ascribed to a mysterious entity known as the "Nonconformist conscience." The phrase is destitute of point. The Church of England holds the sanctity of marriage as strongly as any Protestant communion, and the Church of Rome does not even acknowledge divorce. There may or may not have been a majority of Nonconformists at Sheffield. Because most Dissenters are Liberals, it does not follow that most Liberals are Dissenters. Many Nonconformists were Unionists, and had nothing to do with the matter. The Conference at Sheffield, like other caucuses, comprised men of all religions and of none. A Conservative caucus would have been similarly composed, though in different proportions, and would have taken the same line. Englishmen have always insisted that, so far as public knowledge goes, their leaders should be men of unblemished character. If Mr. Norton had won his action against Lord Melbourne instead of losing it, Lord Melbourne would not have been Prime Minister when Queen Victoria came to the throne. The theory that, Mr. Parnell being an Irishman, the question was one for the Irish nation, ignored the "union of hearts" and the political identity of Irish Nationalists with English Home Rulers. The general belief at Sheffield was that Mr. Parnell would withdraw of his own accord from a position which had become hopeless. Mr. Gladstone was of the same opinion. To expect that he should be profoundly shocked, as by some new and monstrous form of depravity, was absurd. Exemplary as his own life had been, he had sat in Cabinet more than once with colleagues who were models of public integrity, and yet, as he knew, though the nation might not, were in private no better than Mr. Parnell.

What first struck Mr. Gladstone was the handle that Mr. Parnell had given to the Church of Rome, which had always distrusted him as a heretic, and now for the first time found itself in a position to strike him a blow. There was not a more ardent Home Ruler in England than Cardinal Manning, and he was convinced that Parnell must resign. But the Roman Church is a mighty engine, which cannot be set at work in a moment, and there was not a moment to lose. Mr. Parnell had sent the usual circular to his followers as if nothing had happened, and they were to meet him at two o'clock on Tuesday the 25th of November. Mr. Gladstone came to London from Hawarden on Monday the 24th. That afternoon he saw two or three of his most intimate colleagues, and wrote a letter to one of them, Mr. Morley, for communication in substance to Mr. Parnell. He had already seen Mr. McCarthy and stated to him, as he stated to Mr. Morley, that Mr. Parnell's continuance "would not only place many hearty and effective friends of Ireland in a position of great embarrassment, but would render his retention of the leadership of the Liberal party, based as it had been mainly upon the prosecution of the Irish cause, almost a nullity." Communication with Parnell, however, was seldom easy, and sometimes, as in the present case, impossible. The Nationalists met at two o'clock, and, knowing nothing of Mr. Gladstone's letter, re-elected Parnell as their Chairman.[1] An hour afterwards Mr. Morley read Mr. Gladstone's letter to Mr. Parnell,[2] and pressed upon him the wisdom of a temporary retirement. He had just received a vote of confidence. If he

1890.

Parnell and the Church of Rome.

Mr. Gladstone's letter.

[1] The election was stated to be unanimous, and substantially it was so. But two Members, a Catholic and a Protestant, said at once that it was a question of morality, not of politics, and that they could have nothing more to do with Mr. Parnell. My informant was present at the meeting.

[2] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, pp. 439-446.

1890. were satisfied with that and yielded to the storm, it might soon pass over his head. If he did not, he would be the ruin of Home Rule. No better advice could have been given. Six months must by law elapse before Parnell could marry Mrs. O'Shea. If at the end of that time he married her, as in fact he did, it was quite possible that he might return with the general consent of British Liberals to his old position. Parnell obstinately declined to give way, and that same evening Mr. Gladstone's letter was sent to the Press. When Parnell was told that this would be done, he said calmly, "I think Mr. Gladstone will be quite right to do that; it will put him straight with his party." That no doubt it did. But when Mr. Parnell saw the letter in print, dignified and considerate as it was, his self-restraint gave way, and he forthwith published a violent manifesto against his allies of five years' standing. On the 29th of November he addressed the Irish people through the newspapers. He told them that the independence of their representatives had been sapped by English wire-pullers; that English Liberals claimed a veto upon the choice of an Irish leader, and would give up Home Rule unless he were thrown to the English wolves, who were howling for his destruction. He then proceeded to inform them of conditions which Mr. Gladstone had demanded of him at Hawarden in the previous December. These were that the number of Irish representatives at Westminster should be reduced from 103 to 32; that the Irish Legislature should be prohibited from dealing with the land; and that the Royal Irish Constabulary should remain under British control. Mr. Gladstone promptly denied this statement. He had only invited Parnell to talk over the prospects of Home Rule, and no definite proposal had been made on one side or the other. Parnell's story was on

Parnell's manifesto.

the face of it improbable. For if Gladstone had betrayed the cause, Parnell himself was a party to the betrayal, not merely in keeping silence, but in calling upon his countrymen at Liverpool the day after he left Hawarden to rally round the Liberal Leader. For the first time in his life Parnell had lost his head, and was beginning to hit blindly without point or aim. 1890.

Nevertheless he was still, by virtue of his force, a dangerous antagonist, and he was obviously bent on fighting to the last. What were his Parliamentary colleagues to do? Their position was a cruel one. They had to choose between their leader and their cause. Already he had dealt Home Rule a damaging blow. Unless prompt measures were taken to restrain him he would destroy it. Success in the most favourable circumstances was doubtful. If the Home Rulers did not depose their Chief, failure was certain. The fault was his alone. The consequences fell upon his country. His unfortunate entanglement had undoubtedly impaired his public usefulness, and it now threatened to give the Unionist Government a majority at the next election. From America Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien advised compliance with the Liberal demand that Parnell should go. The party were summoned to meet again in one of the Committee Rooms at the House of Commons, and a fierce, protracted struggle ensued. From the first division, taken on a subsidiary point, it appeared that the majority against Parnell was nearly two to one. But, majority or no majority, he had not the slightest intention of yielding. His principal opponent was Mr. Sexton. His principal supporter was Mr. Redmond. For several days the proceedings were conducted with ability, gravity, and decorum. Mr. Parnell adroitly suggested that before his deposition fresh assurances about the

Committee Room Fifteen.

1890. constabulary and the land should be obtained from Mr. Gladstone. A small deputation went to Mr. Gladstone for that purpose. But he simply said that they must choose their own leader themselves, and that it would be obviously impossible for him to introduce any Home Rule Bill which had not the full concurrence of the Nationalist party. He could not therefore make any statement of his future policy in connection with the Irish Leadership. When this answer was reported to the Irish party, Mr. Parnell bitterly taunted his adversaries with having "sold him for nothing," and obstinately refused to yield. But every day he lost ground. The Catholic Bishops of Ireland had already issued a manifesto declaring that a man "convicted of the gravest offences known to religion and society" was "wholly unworthy of Christian confidence." In the Committee Room discussion proceeded on different lines, and Mr. Sexton, one of the most powerful debaters who ever sat in Parliament, argued that representatives of the Irish people had no right to surrender the Irish cause for the sake of any man, however eminent. Mr. Parnell turned at bay and fought with magnificent energy. He used and abused his technical rights as Chairman, though the question of his Chairmanship was precisely the point in dispute. At last the majority felt that to protract such a contest could do no good. They rose and left the room to the number of forty-five, twenty-six remaining with their former Chief. The painful struggle was at an end, and the forty-five elected Mr. Justin McCarthy as their Chairman. Mr. McCarthy accepted the post with infinite reluctance, his regard for Parnell being deep and sincere. But public spirit overcame his scruples. Mr. Parnell immediately crossed the Irish Channel and took forcible possession of Mr. O'Brien's newspaper,

Irish deputation to Gladstone.

Dec. 6.

Dec. 3. The Irish Bishops.

Deposition of Parnell.

Dec. 9.

United Ireland, which was supporting the majority. 1890.
His main object, however, was to prevent Sir John Pope-Hennessy, a distinguished Nationalist,[1] from being returned for a vacant seat at Kilkenny. Pope-Hennessy was against Parnell's leadership, and therefore Parnell ran a candidate of his own. This was his earliest open battle with the Church, and the Church won. The priests worked hard for Pope-Hennessy, as good a candidate as they could well have had, and he was elected by a very Dec. 22.
large majority. In this case the first round was decisive. The Church of Rome beat Parnell with the weapon he had himself put into its hands. At the end of the year Mr. O'Brien returned from America to Europe. He could not land in any part of the United Kingdom without being at once arrested. Parnell accordingly met him at Dec. 30.
Boulogne, and negotiations for a compromise Negotiations at Boulogne and Calais.
were set on foot. They were renewed at Calais
on the return of Mr. Dillon in January 1891, 1891.
and dragged their futile course into the month of February. They never had any chance of success, for Parnell never meant that they should succeed. He wanted to sow discord between his two chief opponents, and he failed. On the 12th of February they both came to England, were at once arrested, and were locked up in an Irish gaol for several months. Mr. Parnell threw himself into the new fray, a fray of his own raising, and purely personal, with a feverish energy he had never shown before. His friends did not know him. The cold, stern, reticent man had become a reckless, restless, passionate fighter for a cause which it would have been difficult accurately to define, though he called it freedom from English dictation. The Irish people did not take that view of it. His candidates were defeated in North Sligo and in April 2.

[1] The original of Anthony Trollope's *Phineas Finn*.

1891. Carlow. His marriage to Mrs. O'Shea, which
July 7. might have partially rehabilitated him in England,
June 25. Parnell's marriage. had just the opposite effect in Ireland, for the Catholic regards the union of divorced persons with abhorrence. The *Freeman's Journal*, which had the largest circulation in Ireland, turned against him for this very reason. When Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien came out of prison at the end of July they used all their influence on the side of the majority. Parnell himself had never really recovered from the illness of 1886. He had been a delicate man ever since, and the strain which he put upon his constitution in 1891 was more than it could bear. He came back from one of his constant journeys to Ireland on the last day of September,
Death of Parnell. after founding a new paper, the *Independent*, prostrate and exhausted. The rheumatism from which he was suffering went suddenly to his heart, and he died in his house at Brighton on the 6th of October, aged forty-five.

Oct. 11. The public funeral of Charles Stewart Parnell at Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin was the end of
Parnell and O'Connell. an epoch. No man since Daniel O'Connell, who died in 1847, had anything like the same personal ascendency in Irish politics. Parnell knew and cared very little about O'Connell. After his quarrel with British Liberalism, and just before his own death, his friend and biographer reminded him of the alliance between O'Connell and Lord Melbourne. But Parnell did not understand the allusion. "I am very ignorant," he said,[1] and it was true. He had never studied history, nor cared to study it. That was not his only defect. "Of constructive faculty," says Mr. Morley, who did much business with him, "he never showed a trace." He could not draft a Bill. O'Connell was an excellent lawyer, a supreme orator, an ardent,

[1] O'Brien's *Life of Parnell*, vol. ii. p. 331.

pure-blooded Celt who spoke the Erse language, 1891.
and a devout Catholic. In all these respects Parnell was totally unlike him. He knew nothing, and cared nothing, about law. Eloquence he despised, believing that most speeches were made from vanity. He acted upon the Duke of Wellington's maxim, though he probably never heard of it, "Say what you have to say, don't quote Latin, and sit down." His strength in debate was that he always knew exactly what he meant, and never wasted a word. His religious opinions, if he had any, he kept to himself. But he was ostensibly a Protestant, and a member of the Episcopal Church which Mr. Gladstone disestablished. O'Connell was a man of so sunny and genial a nature, despite the not infrequent violence of his abuse, that he could not even hate England. Parnell, though he acted with Englishmen for his own purposes, did always hate this country, because he thought that it had oppressed his own. His family belonged to the English pale, and he was far more English than he knew. Apart from his own personal ambition, which was boundless, and his practical instinct for the possible, he would gladly have seen Ireland an independent Republic. He would have been satisfied with Home Rule because, and only because, he knew that he could not hope for more. The odds were too tremendous for a policy of physical force. Sentiment in public affairs he despised. The "seven consecrated centuries" were as repugnant to him as the "union of hearts," and he admired Mr. Gladstone chiefly for "knowing more moves in the game" than himself. The protests of outraged morality on either side of the Channel against his personal misconduct he regarded as hypocritical cant, like the indignation of England and Scotland at boycotting and outrage. It was this strange insensibility which led him to ruin.

1891. He simply could not understand what moral scruples meant. After his fall he expressed regret for having left his colleagues too much to themselves, and especially for not having prevented the Plan of Campaign, which he always thought impolitic. It does not appear that he felt any remorse for the injury he had done to Ireland. The Church to which the vast majority of his countrymen belonged was to him as foreign an institution as the House of Commons. He loved it as little, and understood it far less. He had taken no pains to cultivate or conciliate it, and it finally wrought his destruction.

Land Purchase Bill.

Dec. 8, 1890.

One of the last votes given by Parnell in the House of Commons was in support of Mr. Balfour's larger Land Purchase Bill for Ireland, which he had previously opposed. The second reading of this measure passed with ease, while the Nationalists were discussing their differences upstairs, but it did not become law till the end of the session in August 1891. It was not a mere extension of the Ashbourne Acts. It was a much more ambitious measure. Indeed, it was not altogether unlike Mr. Gladstone's Bill of 1886, though there would be no Irish Parliament responsible to the British tax-payer. For the first time the whole of the purchase money was to be advanced by the State. The tenant would then pay an annuity of four per cent on the price of his holding, whatever it was, until at the end of forty-nine years the land would become his freehold. A security to the British Exchequer was found in the Irish share of the probate-duty granted to the County Councils of England in 1888. A limit of thirty millions was placed upon the sum which the Treasury could lend. Although this Bill was severely criticised in Committee, its passage through the House of Commons was smoothed by the division in the

Irish camp. Mr. Balfour accepted the most important of Mr. Parnell's amendments, and the House of Lords did not insist upon any serious alteration. The Act was too complicated to work well, and was very far from being a permanent settlement of the question. But it showed at least that Mr. Balfour had taken pains to understand the material needs of Ireland, and was not satisfied with a simple administration of the criminal law. The steps which he took for the relief of distress strengthened this view, and for the first time the Chief Secretary, author of "coercion for ever," as it was called, became really popular. His continual absence from Ireland, even when Parliament was not sitting, had been often, not always fairly, impugned by the Opposition. But in the autumn of 1890 he visited the poorest parts of the West to see the condition of the people with his own eyes, and was received with the sympathetic courtesy which belongs to that born gentleman, the Irish peasant. A charitable fund was raised for the relief of the distress caused by failure of the potato-crop, and Parliament added a small grant from the Exchequer. In the winter of 1890 and the spring of 1891 there was serious destitution among the Irish people, with which the Chief Secretary set himself to cope in a practical and energetic spirit. Fourteen thousand pounds were spent on railways through contractors who undertook to employ local workmen. Each man received an allowance of two shillings a week for labour, and the Government provided huts where there was no suitable accommodation. The largest number of persons working on these railways at one time was 14,000. A large quantity of seed potatoes was also supplied from the north-east to the west of Ireland, and for this purpose also money was advanced by the Government.

1891.

Mr. Balfour's Irish tour.

Construction of railways.

1891. One result of these beneficent undertakings was materially to improve the relations between Great Britain and Ireland. Ministers no longer appeared simply as coercionists, and the Irish peasants perceived that British credit, which would supply their most pressing wants when other resources failed, was an incident of the Union not to be overlooked. While the Parliamentary representatives of the Irish people were quarrelling over the leadership, the Chief Secretary, whom they had united for years in attacking, had alleviated the sufferings of the people themselves. The man who passed the Crimes Act proved not to be an ogre, but a friendly stranger, who really did seem at last to know something about Ireland.

Mr. Balfour's popularity.

Parnell and Rome.

It was the Church of Rome, and no individual, that really succeeded Parnell in Ireland. "Rome Rule" came not as the accompaniment of Home Rule, but as the alternative to Parnellism. So long as Parnell's authority was paramount, in the decade from 1880 to 1890, and especially in the second half of it, Ireland could not be called a priest-ridden nation. The priests, the bishops, even the Pope himself, were taught that politics were for laymen, not for them, and the priests would have lost all influence over their flocks if they had not obeyed. In November 1890, by no merit and no action of their own, the priests regained in a moment all that they had lost. The Plan of Campaign was a political device, with which it could be plausibly contended that they had nothing to do, and, moreover, Parnell had nothing to do with it himself. The findings of the Parnell Commission were in Nationalist Ireland waste paper, the opinion of three Englishmen on matters exclusively Irish. All Catholics, on the other hand, acknowledged that of personal morality the Church was supreme judge, and that the offence of which Parnell had

been convicted was a deadly sin. Even before the Bishops issued their manifesto, no Catholic could doubt what the decision of the Church would be, and though some Catholics had the courage to defy it, they could not hope to succeed. The Bishops were on impregnable ground. For though Christian churches differed about the lawfulness of divorce, they all agreed in condemnation of the man who made divorce possible. If the Church was "Anti-Parnellite," it was so because Parnell had broken the law of God and man. When the priests became election agents for anti-Parnellite candidates they were within their rights, and could claim the support of all faithful Catholics. Had Parnell lived as long as Gladstone, he could not have recovered his old position in Ireland. The Church of Rome neither forgives nor forgets. His nominal successor,[1] a man of great Parliamentary capacity, was a Catholic, one of those Liberal Catholics who had been educated at Trinity College. But in Ireland Mr. Redmond's influence was at that time very small. His own Church condemned him. Once more, apparently for an indefinite period, the Irish priest resumed his sway. How far this change or reaction was for the better, and how far for the worse, it is not the business of a secular historian to decide. Of the fact there can be no doubt. Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Redmond were symbols of the two powers which, since the days of Guelfs and Ghibellines, have divided the Catholic world. In England Mr. McCarthy would have had no chance, for a mere hint at the revival of priestcraft would have buried the divorce in oblivion. In Ireland Mr. Redmond was foredoomed to failure. So long as he remained at the head of a group calling itself Parnellite, the priests could point at him as a rebel against the authority

1891.

[1] Mr. John Redmond.

1891. of the Church, the principles of religion, and the sanctity of the home.

In England the effect of the divorce case seemed to have almost passed away. Mr. Gladstone had satisfied his followers, and Mr. Parnell had been
Jan. 21. removed from his place. Three by-elections in Ireland had ratified the removal, and in England a Liberal victory at Hartlepool was taken to show that the political crisis had reached its close. At the same time, it was clear that the political confusion of Ireland had extricated the Government from a formidable dilemma. The arrest of Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien in September 1890 was considered by many Unionists to be a grave error of judgment, by most Home Rulers as an act of blind despair. The divorce case in November broke up the Nationalist party, and left Mr. Balfour to carry out his remedial measures without disturbance from political attacks. During the last months of his life, Mr. Parnell's resentment of Liberal interference made him more favourable to the Conservatives than he had been since 1886, and Nationalists were too much absorbed in their own affairs to give the Government any serious trouble. Mr. Balfour took advantage of the opportunity to make himself a new kind of reputation in Ireland, and to silence his Liberal critics by doing exactly what they had accused him of failing to do. Fortune, says the old satirist, is not a goddess in her own right. It is men who make her divine, and assign her her place in the heavens. Ministers expected that when they met Parliament in November 1890 they would be confronted by a resolute and encouraged Opposition. Instead of that, the Address was voted in an evening, and in a fortnight both Houses adjourned for the Christmas holidays. The gender of Fortune is feminine.

CHAPTER VIII

LIBERAL CONSERVATISM

A CONSERVATIVE Government kept in office by Liberal votes was an obvious subject for cheap and easy gibes. But if Ireland be set apart, as a case by itself, the legislative blend which proceeded from the combination was mild and sound. Great constitutional changes were out of court. The Parliament of 1886 only saw them in the form of abstract propositions, and then steadily voted them down. On the other hand, a Cabinet which depended upon the support of Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain could not go to sleep and do nothing, like the Cabinet of 1874. Lord Salisbury was immersed in foreign affairs. But his colleagues succeeded in carrying many useful reforms, which satisfied Liberal Unionists without alarming Conservatives. The Local Government Act of 1888 was one of the best measures ever carried, and in London especially, where its operation was most conspicuous, it began at once a course of beneficent activity which has created the public life of the Metropolis. We have seen how Lord Randolph Churchill refused, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, to ask Parliamentary sanction for a continuance of the duties levied on coal by the Metropolitan Board, whose duties the London County Council took over. The Council had no wish that this dead remnant of municipal protection should be

1889.

The London coal-dues.

1889. revived, and in 1889, with the consent of the Government, a private Member carried a Bill for the final abolition of the London coal-dues. A Local Government Bill for Scotland, running, so far as possible, on the same lines as the English one, was the principal measure of a singularly uneventful Session. In that part of the United Kingdom called Great Britain the Government pursued a policy which might be called moderate Liberalism. The London County Council speedily became far more popular with Liberals than with Conservatives, and the Progressive party in the first Council considerably outnumbered the Moderates. Representative institutions in England will not work without the element of party. But the disturbing element of Ireland was excluded from municipal politics, and many Londoners would vote for Progressives in Municipal, who would not vote for Liberals in Parliamentary, elections. The intellectual level of the County Council was far above that of the Metropolitan Board, and men of real distinction, such as Lord Lingen, Lord Hobhouse, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Sir Thomas Farrer, were chosen by the Council itself as Aldermen.

Local Government for Scotland.

A serious and successful attempt was made this year at once to strengthen the navy and to ensure the future maintenance of its strength. Lord Salisbury laid down as the proper standard an equality with the two strongest navies of the Continent combined, and he certainly did not put it unduly high. But to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord George Hamilton, belongs the principal credit of the new system. The total sum for which he asked the sanction of Parliament was twenty-one millions and a half. Of this large sum he proposed that eleven millions and a half should be spread over the Navy Estimates till the end of the financial year 1893-4, while the other ten

The standard for the navy.

millions should be charged upon the Consolidated Fund till the 31st March 1896. As a result Lord George promised that the Navy should be stronger by seventy ships of war. The constitutional argument against these proposals was obvious enough. To make provision for the future of the Navy by Act of Parliament is to give the House of Lords an unconstitutional control over finance. A more practical argument was that within a decade the designs of battle-ships, and of the guns for arming them, might have entirely changed. On the other hand, comparative statistics showed that the naval supremacy of Great Britain was in danger, and that is always enough for the House of Commons. Lord George Hamilton carried his Bill with the more ease because it was assailed from his own side of the House by antagonistic speakers on opposite grounds. Lord Randolph Churchill attacked it as bad finance, while a naval officer of distinction, Lord Charles Beresford, denounced it as a "phantom addition to the fleet." The Bill had a tolerably smooth course. It was introduced on the 7th of March, and received the Royal Assent on the 31st of May.

1889. Increase of seventy ships.

It upset the equilibrium of Mr. Goschen's third Budget by creating a deficit of nearly two millions. This sum he proposed to meet by taking away from the reduction of debt a million which he had saved through converting Consols; by adding one per cent to the succession-duty on estates above ten thousand pounds in value, and by a very small increase of the tax on beer. There was not much in these financial changes to excite opposition, and they were made with ease. But some of Mr. Goschen's remarks in delivering his annual statement are not unworthy of notice. The diminished consumption of wine he plausibly connected with the habit of smoking

April 15. Goschen's third Budget.

1889. cigarettes after dinner. A more important fact was that the Income Tax now yielded for the first time as much as two millions sterling for every penny. The tax then stood at sixpence, and in Mr. Goschen's opinion ought not to be raised. But when he said that simplicity in finance had been pushed as far as it would go, and that new sources of supply might have to be tapped, he got upon rather dangerous ground. Financial simplicity, narrowing the area of taxation, and limiting the number of articles taxed, had been fundamental principles with Gladstone and Peel. It was by this sort of suggestive dallying with novel ideas which he did not work out that Mr. Goschen inspired economists with a kind of vague distrust. They did not know where to have him, or what he might say next. Ingenious with figures, admirable in detail, he sometimes appeared to hold no doctrine absolute, except free trade. It was impossible, however, for the most censorious critic to cavil at his boast that the National Debt, though seven hundred millions, stood at a lower figure than it had reached for eighty years. And this year at all events Mr. Goschen made no further grants to local taxation. Paying rates out of taxes is the most wasteful form of expenditure ever yet devised by a guardian of the public purse.

Suggestion of new taxes.

Free-trader though he was, Mr. Goschen became responsible as a member of the Cabinet for a measure which, if it had passed, would have deprived this country of a benefit she derived from freely accepting the generosity of other nations. All the sugar consumed in the United Kingdom is necessarily imported, and no tax had been levied upon it since 1874. The Governments of the countries which produce sugar were in the habit of paying bounties upon its exportation by giving back to the exporter the tax he had paid, and some-

The sugar bounties.

thing more. Their own tax-payers had much reason to complain of this vicious system, which, like other forms of protection, was very difficult to abolish. To the people of these islands it was pure gain, the most obvious and indisputable advantage which a nation with a tariff for revenue only was reaping from the protective tariff of the foreigner. For not only was sugar cheaper to all who consumed it. The manufactures in which sugar is a raw material, especially jam, received a great stimulus and encouragement from these Austrian, German, and Brazilian bounties. No free-trader could deny that protective duties on the importation of British goods were, so far as they went, injurious to British commerce, though to retaliate against them would increase the injury. But the bounties were a clear case to the contrary, for the British public were presented with an essential article of food below cost price by the economic folly of protectionists abroad. In the east end of London, however, a few sugar refiners got up an agitation against the unfairness of prices artificially low, and some of the Governments which paid the bounties were on the look-out for an opportunity to get rid of them. An International Conference met in England at the end of 1887, and in August 1888 a Convention was signed. Three of the countries concerned, Sweden, Denmark, and Brazil, refused to take part in it. France and Austria-Hungary withheld their signatures until unanimity was secured. The signatory Powers were Germany, Russia, Italy, Spain, Holland, and Belgium. Of these six countries all, except Italy and Spain, produce sugar, and, by the terms of the Convention, they could as a majority bind the British Government to exclude sugar coming from France, Austria, Sweden, the United States, and Brazil, their competitors in our market. They themselves agreed to abolish bounties

1889.

1888.

The Sugar Convention.

1889. altogether. Happily the sanction of Parliament was required for this Anti-Commercial Treaty, and that sanction was not obtained. In the House of Commons the Bill was hardly discussed. It was killed by the energy, persistency, and ability of one man, who had then no seat in either branch of the Legislature. Sir Thomas Farrer had been for more than twenty years Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade. He was a master of economic science, and he wrote a singularly lucid, vigorous, persuasive style. In a series of letters to the Press, which were circulated as leaflets, he showed how few were the persons interested in the abolition of bounties, and how many were those to whom cheap sugar was vital. The Government would not face the storm. They were not sure of the Liberal Unionists, and they dropped the Bill. Among the benefactors of the working classes a high place should be given to Sir Thomas Farrer.

Failure of the Sugar Bill.

June 17.

Another financial question of a very different kind brought the Queen and the Royal Family into practical politics. At the beginning of July a Message was read to the House of Commons asking that suitable provision should be made for the Prince of Wales's eldest son, and for his daughter, Princess Louise of Wales, on her marriage to the Earl of Fife, created a Duke on the occasion. A Select Committee of twenty-three Members was appointed, with the First Lord of the Treasury, Mr. Smith, as Chairman, to consider the whole question of Royal Grants. In the Committee the Government proposed fixed pecuniary sums for the sons and daughters of His Royal Highness. Mr. Gladstone brought forward an alternative scheme, which Ministers ultimately adopted in lieu of their own. Under this arrangement the Prince of Wales was to receive for the rest of his mother's reign an extra payment of thirty-six thousand pounds a year,

The Royal grants.

payable quarterly, from which, with the sanction of the Queen and the Government, he would make provision for his own children. When the Report of the Committee came down to the House, a curious divergence showed itself in the ranks of the Opposition. Mr. Gladstone pleaded with an eloquence rarely surpassed even by him for the maintenance of the Crown not only with dignity but with splendour. He was enthusiastically devoted not only to the person of the Monarch, but to the institution of the Monarchy, and the Heir to the Throne, whom these grants more immediately concerned, had always shown punctilious courtesy to the most illustrious subject of the Queen. But though Mr. Gladstone put forth all his power, personal as well as political, on behalf of these grants, and though his plan was far more rational than that originally proposed, he did not carry his own party with him. When he sat down the Tories cheered him with prolonged and vociferous energy. Most Liberals voted against him with Mr. Morley and Mr. Labouchere. One personal tribute is too significant to be passed over. The Irish Nationalists, though most of them were advanced democrats, voted in a body with the statesman who had sacrificed everything except honour to their cause. By their aid the majority was swelled to 398. The minority was 116. The allegiance of Mr. Gladstone's followers was not otherwise impaired, and Republicanism in England was as dead as a door-nail. He saw further than they. The Royal Grants were for the moment unpopular with the working classes, though the Report of the Committee clearly showed that on the Queen's accession, when her hereditary revenues were handed over to the public purse, Her Majesty was assured of Parliament's readiness to make adequate provision for the dignity of the Throne.

1889. July 25. Gladstone's support. Radical opposition. Irish allegiance to Gladstone.

1889. But the subject was soon forgotten, and Mr. Gladstone's policy prevented it from being raised again until a new Civil List was required by the demise of the Crown.

In this rather flat and meagre Session a new Department, the Board of Agriculture, was created by statute. For the last two years the Chancellor of the Duchy had presided over an Agricultural Committee of the Privy Council, just as if agriculture were education, or some other unconsidered trifle of that kind. It was now provided with a Board of its own, and a salaried President sitting in Parliament, like the Local Government Board and the Board of Trade. The multiplication of public offices is expensive, and not always remunerative. That agriculture should not have been specially represented in Downing Street until it had ceased to be the main employment of the population is strange. At the time the Protectionists hoped much from the choice of Mr. Henry Chaplin to be the first President of the Board, but their hopes were doomed to disappointment. Once in office, Mr. Chaplin never gave any trouble. A still more useful and practical measure enabled Town and County Councils to levy a rate of a penny in the pound for providing technical instruction.

Technical instruction.

British competition was severely hampered in the markets of the world by the lack of scientific training among the commercial classes, and though the Act was a small step, it was a step in the right direction. The London County Council showed laudable zeal in adopting and extending it.

Scottish universities.

The Universities Act for Scotland increased the Parliamentary grant to those institutions, and abolished theological tests except for theological chairs. That all such tests in the faculty of theology, as elsewhere, are futile and irreligious, Mr. Bryce and other Liberals argued without avail.

One Bill passed by a private Member in 1889 was an invaluable contribution to social reform. The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act, introduced by Mr. Mundella, and supported by the Attorney-General,[1] prohibited the employment of children under ten, and made it a misdemeanour, punishable with imprisonment, to neglect or ill-treat them. The Government were defeated by the House of Commons in their endeavour to except children employed in theatres. But this amendment was inserted by the House of Lords, with the provisos that the children must be more than seven years old, and that a license permitting them to perform must be obtained from the local magistrates. 1889. Prevention of cruelty to children.

When a Conservative Government is in power, the House of Lords are accustomed to take a holiday, so that they may turn like a giant refreshed upon the next Liberal Administration. In the case of the Cruelty to Children Bill they came to the assistance of Her Majesty's Ministers, as well as of the theatrical managers. In a case more nearly concerning themselves, but also important to the financial and commercial worlds, they took the bit in their teeth. When the last Duke of Buckingham died, the Chairmanship of Committees in the House of Lords became vacant. The Lord Chairman's functions in Committee of the Whole House are purely mechanical. But in dealing with private Bills, especially Bills which are unopposed, his powers are great, and their just exercise requires a clear head, as well as a strong will. The Prime Minister proposed Lord Balfour of Burleigh for the vacancy. Lord Granville proposed the Earl of Morley, a Liberal Unionist, who had been his candidate in 1886. This time Lord Granville was successful, for March 25. April 4.

[1] Sir Richard Webster.

1889. Revolt of the Lords. Lord Morley received 95 votes against Lord Balfour's 77. Both candidates were perfectly competent, and the vote did not really affect Lord Salisbury's prestige. It merely showed that independence was possible even in the House of Lords.

1890. Mr. Goschen's Budget for 1890 was the most satisfactory he had yet expounded, his surplus being three millions and a half. The increase of revenue he explained by a "rush to alcohol," which even cigarettes had been powerless to check. Yet, lamentable as this phænomenon might be from a moral point of view, it enabled the Chancellor of the Exchequer to remit taxation. He reduced the duty on tea from sixpence to fourpence a pound, and the duty on currants from seven shillings to two shillings a hundredweight. The duty on silver plate was remitted altogether. The house-duty was considerably diminished in the case of small houses, and all houses were exempted, whatever their value, which were let in tenements to the working classes. So far the Budget was an excellent one, and Mr. Goschen's vague language of the previous year about finding new sources of taxation was forgotten. But undeterred by the experience of 1888, the Government came once more into conflict with the champions of temperance. They proposed to give the local authorities the sum of one million pounds from an extra tax of sixpence a gallon on spirits, and about a third of that amount from the existing tax on beer, to be employed, among other objects, in the purchase and extinction of publicans' licenses. An agitation was at once raised, and conducted with great vigour, especially by Sir Wilfrid Lawson, against this new proposal to endow the licensed victualler, or rather in most cases the owner of tied houses, the brewer whose beer the publican was

Tea and currants.

Proposed grant for publican's licenses.

bound to sell, at the cost of the national exchequer. 1890.
The actual sum involved, about four hundred thousand pounds, might not be a very large one. But the principle of giving pecuniary compensation for the loss of annual licenses was clearly recognised, though the Court of Appeal had decided in the case of Sharp *v.* Wakefield that Dec. 15, 1888.
Magistrates had an absolute discretion to refuse the renewal of any license to sell drink on the premises at the end of the twelve months for which it had been granted, because, for instance, the needs of the district no longer required it,[1] or for any other reason. This part of Mr. Goschen's scheme was not included in the Finance Bill. It was put into a Local Taxation Bill, and entrusted to Mr. Ritchie, who carried the second reading by a large majority. The Opposition continued the May 15.
struggle with unabated energy, not merely on Mr. Ritchie's Bill, but also on the corresponding clauses of the Budget Bill. The shrewdest Parliamentarian among the Irish Members, Mr. Healy, contrived to insert words providing that the beer- and whisky-money should be appropriated as Parliament might direct by any Act passed in the present Session. In Committee on the Local Taxation Bill, the fight was steadily kept up from day to day, until at last, during Ascot races, about which Mr. Smith June 19.
was too good a man to have any precise information, the vital clause was carried by a narrow margin of four votes. This was on a Thursday, Ascot Cup Day. Next Monday it was announced that the The licensing clauses dropped.
licensing clauses would be dropped. The Government proposed that the money which was to have been employed for buying out license-holders should accumulate until some means for spending it could be devised. Thereupon Mr. Healy cited

[1] This decision was confirmed by the House of Lords on the 19th of March 1891.

1890. the words of his amendment, the Speaker doubted whether accumulation was appropriation, and ultimately, in the month of August, the whole fund was given, with the assent of the County Councils, to technical instruction. No result of this protracted conflict could have been more salutary. It was precisely what Mr. Arthur Acland, a zealous friend of education, had originally proposed. Nothing, on the other hand, was further from the intentions of the Government, who no doubt honestly desired a decrease of public-houses, but were equally anxious to protect "the trade" from the consequences of Sharp *v.* Wakefield.

Increased grant for technical schools.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER IX

FREE EDUCATION

THE Session of 1890-91, though largely occupied with Ireland, was not unimportant to Great Britain. 1891.

Immediately after the Christmas Holidays there was performed a tardy act of justice and repentance. By a unanimous vote the House expunged from its journals the Resolution passed on the 22nd of June 1880, which prohibited Charles Bradlaugh from either swearing or affirming his allegiance to the Crown, and therefore from doing his duty as one of the Members for Northampton. Since 1886, when he took the oath under the protection of the Speaker, he had borne an active part in the business of the House, and won the respect of all parties for his genial, manly, independent character. Though an advanced Radical, he was a sturdy opponent of Socialism, especially of a legal eight hours' day. During the debate a Tory squire, Sir Walter Barttelot, gave a generous testimony to the esteem in which Mr. Bradlaugh was held by all his Parliamentary colleagues. He had long since abandoned the atheistic propaganda of his youth, devoting himself rather to social and political reform. His life had been a hard one, and though not yet sixty, he was worn out. He never knew what the House had done, and three days afterwards he was dead. Payment of Members might have saved him, for he was obliged, after his

Removal of the Bradlaugh resolution. Jan. 27.

Death of Bradlaugh.

1891. gratuitous labours during the week, to lecture on Saturday evenings for such remuneration as he could get. His name will always be remembered in connection with the Act which relieved "Agnostics" from the necessity of profaning a theistic oath, and those who vainly tried to exclude him from Parliament did the Christian religion more harm in a week than he could have done it in twenty years.

Having given up the struggle against those who believed too little, the House of Commons turned, almost without a breathing-space, upon those who believed too much. Within a week of Bradlaugh's death Mr. Gladstone moved the second reading of a Bill enabling Roman Catholics to hold the offices of Lord Chancellor in England and Lord-Lieutenant in Ireland. These were the only places under the Crown which had not been freed from religious tests, and it might have been supposed that a Cabinet in which a Catholic held the office of Home Secretary would have accepted the Bill as a matter of course. Mr. Gladstone, in a speech of calm and temperate wisdom, recalled the assurances of Catholic loyalty which he had himself elicited by his Vatican pamphlet in 1874, and acknowledged in another pamphlet the following year. Then he referred to the case of Mr. Bradlaugh. "A conspicuous man," he said, "an admirable Member of this House, was yesterday laid in his mother-earth." How many months and years had the battle raged over his admission to the Legislature? How had it ended? One distinguished Unionist, Sir Henry James, supported the second reading of the Bill. The Government opposed it, and defeated it by a majority of 33. Some of the Tory rank and file, with dignified urbanity, described it as a "Ripon and Russell Relief Bill," though Lord Herschell was morally certain to be the next

The Catholic Relief Bill. Feb. 4.

Liberal Chancellor, as he had been the last, and Lord Ripon, who had sat in four Cabinets, besides governing India, was not ambitious of Viceregal impotence in Dublin. 1891.

The Government were happier in what they did than in what they prevented others from doing. Mr. Matthews would not vote for relieving the members of his own Church from civil disabilities which in principle nobody could defend. But he carried, with the assistance of his political opponents, a measure for the improvement of factories and workshops. This Bill was mainly directed to the reform of sanitary arrangements, to security against fire, and to safeguards against those various forms of commercial oppression, especially sub-contracts, which go by the generic name of sweating. The hours of women's labour were limited to twelve a day, with an hour and a half for meals. To these salutary provisions a Liberal Member, Mr. Sydney Buxton, added a clause that no child under eleven should be employed in any workshop or factory. The principal defect of the Bill was that it did not include laundries, where women and girls were often employed for an excessive number of hours in working dangerous and unfenced machines. The laundresses held a mass meeting in Hyde Park. But they had no votes, and they were ignored, not without a suspicion that Mr. Matthews was anxious to keep the light of publicity from the laundries of Catholic convents. Another useful measure of a social and administrative kind was Mr. Ritchie's Public Health Act for London, which, besides codifying the law, provided that the vestry, instead of the householder, should be responsible for keeping the pavements clean, and that no new house should be occupied until it had a sufficient supply of water.

Factory Bill.

Exemption of laundries.

London Sanitary Act.

A more ambitious piece of legislation, deserving

1891. both the epithets progressive and conservative, was
The Tithe Act. the Tithe Act. Tithe in kind, a tenth part of the soil's produce, had been commuted to a fixed charge upon the rent in 1835. It was levied upon the tenant, often a Nonconformist, and made the Church of England, through the clergy who received it, unpopular in the rural districts. The economic fact that the landlord paid the tithe, because he would get more rent for his land without it, did not strike the mind of the farmer, who had seldom been taught to distinguish between the legal and the economic incidence of taxes. In Wales, where Nonconformists were especially numerous and strong, tithe riots had occurred which recalled the Irish tithe-wars before the legislation of Sir Robert Peel. After several unsuccessful attempts to deal with the subject, the Government wisely took the bull by the horns, and made the owner, instead of the occupier, liable, not personally, but as owner, and while owner, for the payment of tithes. Tithes were moreover to be collected by distraint, and not by imprisonment. This was the only practical remedy, and it put an end to the grievance which had excited such fierce discontent. To get rid of tithes altogether would be merely to endow the squire instead of the parson. Even disestablishment, which a Conservative Cabinet could hardly be expected to propose, would apply this charge upon the land to national purposes rather than abolish it altogether.

Free education. But the great legislative achievement of 1891 was the establishment of free education in the public elementary schools of England and Wales. This policy, which has more than justified the most sanguine expectations of its promoters, was first brought within the range of practical politics by Mr. Chamberlain. It had been part of his "unauthorised programme," which Conservatives

denounced as Socialistic, from which moderate Liberals shrank, and of which even Mr. Gladstone disapproved. Mr. Chamberlain, however, refused to abandon it, and circumstances had greatly favoured him. The obligations of Lord Salisbury's Government to the Liberal Unionists who kept them in office, and yet refused office themselves, had been heightened and deepened by the persistent support which Lord Hartington, and Mr. Chamberlain himself, had given to the Crimes Act, and to the Irish Administration of Mr. Balfour. Ministers were bound in honour to consult the wishes of their Liberal allies, so far as they could do so without the sacrifice of their own personal convictions. The establishment of County Councils in England and Scotland was an example of this mutual consideration, entirely creditable to both the parties concerned. The Irish Land Act of 1887, with the revision of judicial rents for which it provided, was held by Irish landlords with some justice to have carried conciliation beyond the limits of consistency. An accident brought free education suddenly to the front. Mr. Goschen had in 1888 made a grant from the probate-duty towards the relief of local rates. Under his rather complicated, and by no means Unionist, system of finance a proportionate sum fell to the share of Scotland, and the Local Government Act of 1889 for that country applied it to the payment of school fees. Thus the principle of free education was conceded, and the demand that it should be extended to England became difficult to resist. At all events the Cabinet did not long resist it. Only a small part of what elementary education actually cost was at that time paid by the parent. Every national school certified by a Government Inspector to be efficient received a Parliamentary grant, and every board school received also a contribution from 1891.

1891. the rates. The "voluntary schools," so called because they were managed by private persons or bodies, had in some cases endowments, and in almost every case received voluntary subscriptions, which naturally dwindled as the grant grew. Moreover they had not, like the board schools, been built at the public expense. The Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, and the President of the Council, Lord Cranbrook, who was also Head of the Education Department, were both political Churchmen, anxious to protect the voluntary schools, most of which were Church schools, from being superseded or starved out. Free education, after all, was not within the mischief of the Ten Commandments, and the Archbishop of Canterbury[1] considered that it would be a safeguard against what he called insidious attacks. So the Government very sensibly gave way, and calmed the fears of their more timid supporters by assuring them that if free education were given by the Liberals, it would be given in board schools alone. Mr. Goschen was fortunate in having a surplus of two millions, the precise estimated cost of paying school fees at ten shillings a child. As only half the sum was required for the current year, he had enough left to pay for the improvement of barracks, and for calling in light gold. The Free Education Act and the Local Government Acts were the most popular and successful, the most provident and sagacious of all the statutes that became law during the Parliament of 1886. They met with no opposition, and they proved that the Liberal Unionists had infused a Liberal spirit into the counsels of their allies.

On the 1st of October 1891 the National Liberal Federation met at Newcastle, and drew up a list of political proposals which became more widely than favourably known as the Newcastle

[1] Dr. Benson.

Programme. Mr. Gladstone, who attended and spoke on the second day of the meeting, could not be at his best, for he was in a false position. He himself, as he had proclaimed over and over again, continued in public life for the purposes of the Irish question, and for those purposes alone. Yet he allowed his name to be used as an advertisement for a long list of projects, scarcely one of which united more than a group, while at least one disunited a party. Mr. Gladstone cared nothing about them. He gave his approbation to them because he hoped that they would induce the electors of Great Britain to vote for Home Rule. The resurrection of defunct programmes would make history an old almanac. But three items in this particular prospectus had important consequences, though not of the sort that the composers desired. The Newcastle Programme specified the disestablishment of two Churches, and a local veto on the sale of strong drink. One of these Churches, the Church of Scotland, was Presbyterian. The other, the Church in Wales, was an integral part of the English establishment, belonging to the Province of Canterbury. Many High Churchmen would have voted for the disestablishment of a Presbyterian body which they did not regard as a Church at all. Many members of the Church of Scotland had little sympathy with the recognition of Anglicanism in Protestant Wales. By coupling the two attacks together the wise men at Newcastle enlisted against themselves and their party the strongest interest, with one exception, in the whole of Great Britain. That exception they did not forget. More powerful even than the influence of the clergy was the influence of liquor, and local veto made every publican into a Conservative agent, while the brewers would have been ready, if required, to pay the expenses of every Conservative

1891. The Newcastle Programme.

Disestablishment and Local Veto.

1891. candidate out of their own pockets. A reform of the licensing laws, and especially a reduction in the number of public-houses, were most desirable. The magistrates notoriously neglected their duty in not reducing them after the decision of Sharp *v.* Wakefield. But local veto was a very different thing. It would have enabled three-fourths of the rate-payers voting in a prescribed area to close every public-house there situated. This was a remedy of which only the most extreme champions of legal temperance approved, which would have been totally inoperative in nine cases out of ten, and in the tenth would have led to a riot. Theoretically it was defensible, because it transferred power from the landed interest and the nominees of the Crown to the people themselves. In practice it was doubly mistaken, first, because it ignored the true remedy, which was reduction, not abolition, and secondly, because the working classes, whom it chiefly, almost solely, concerned, would not have it. The most sober and intelligent artisans felt as strongly as Sir Wilfrid Lawson himself the value of temperance and the need of reform. But the idea of compulsory abstinence was repugnant to them, and they would not run the risk of it, however slight. Sir Wilfrid Lawson had made one very distinguished convert. Sir William Harcourt, who went into the Home Office a contemptuous opponent of "grandmotherly legislation," came out of it with the conviction that any weapon against drunkenness was better than none. The result of putting this ill-considered scheme into the official synthesis of Liberalism was to assure the Government of many thousand votes when they appealed to the country. Not satisfied with taking up this and other nostrums which represented his deliberate opinions no more than they represented Lord Salisbury's, Mr. Gladstone at Newcastle went out of

his way to suggest a British evacuation of Egypt, which was in the first place utterly impracticable, in the second place thoroughly unwise, and in the third place excessively unpopular. There have seldom been two more disastrous days in the history of British Liberalism than the first and second of October 1891. 1891. Mr. Gladstone on Egypt.

Very different were the fortunes and prospects of British Conservatism. On the 6th of October, a few hours before the death of Parnell, the First Lord of the Treasury, William Henry Smith, departed this life. Mr. Smith was an amiable man, of industrious habits and vast wealth, who led the House of Commons for five sessions with honest, undistinguished shrewdness. The fact that he should have led the House was far more interesting than any quality of his leadership, and was freely used by moralists who forgot his commercial position to prove that the highest offices were open to modest worth. Mr. Smith's original adoption of Conservative principles is said to have been an accident, the consequence of his rejection by a Liberal club. But no man ever served his party with more faithful and honourable devotion. His successor, as First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House, was Mr. Arthur Balfour. In the four years and a half of his Chief Secretaryship to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland Mr. Balfour had achieved a reputation of the first class. If there was a time, in the summer and autumn of 1890, when the grumblers who infest all parties accused him of ruining his cause and theirs, that period had passed away, and that phase of thought was extinct. His Land Purchase Act, though it was really no very remarkable performance, and his exertions for the relief of Irish distress, proved at least that repression was not his only policy. His resourceful readiness as a debater, and a temper which, if too

Death of William Henry Smith.

Mr. Balfour's leadership.

1891. quickly roused, was singularly placable, fitted him to lead an assembly that dislikes to be either scolded or bored. In Ireland his work was done. The country had fallen a prey to contending factions, which regarded each other with far more animosity than either of them felt for the Government. The House of Commons, though it had been tolerant of Mr. Smith, who offended no one, was not sorry to be led once more by a man of intellectual distinction.

Dec. 21. Lord Hartington's succession. At the close of the year 1891 the death of the Duke of Devonshire removed Lord Hartington from the House of Commons, where he had sat since 1857, and had proposed the amendment which turned out Lord Derby in 1859.[1] His place as Leader of the Liberal Unionists in the Commons was taken by Mr. Chamberlain. His seat for the Rossendale Division of Lancashire was captured

1892. by a Liberal and Home Ruler. The first and only Irish Local Government Bill. important measure of the Session was a Local Government Bill for Ireland, introduced, not by the new Chief Secretary, Mr. Jackson,[2] but by Mr. Balfour himself. This Bill had long been promised, and it was a fundamental principle of Unionism that the administrative arrangements of the three countries should be substantially identical. Immediately after the General Election of 1886 Lord Randolph Churchill, who then led the House of

Aug. 19. Commons, used these words in the debate on the Address. "The great sign-posts of our policy," he said, "are equality, similarity, and, if I may use such a word, simultaneity of treatment, so far as this can possibly and practicably be obtained, for the development of a genuinely popular system in all the four countries which compose the United

April 25. Kingdom." When an Irish Home Ruler introduced, in 1888, a Bill for giving Ireland the County

[1] See vol. ii. p. 211.

[2] Afterwards Lord Allerton.

Councils which were about to be created in England, 1892.
Lord Randolph referred to this speech in very emphatic language. "The declaration I made at that table," he told the House, "was, so far as it related to Ireland, a written declaration. Every sentence of it—I might almost go so far as to say every word—represented the opinions of the Government, and had been submitted to, and assented to, by the Prime Minister[1] and the Chief Secretary for Ireland[2] of that day. . . . More than that, I was given to understand in the plainest way that the declaration of the Government thus made received the full and entire approval of the Unionist party." Nevertheless the Bill in question was rejected, and nothing had since been done to carry out the principle which Lord Randolph Churchill, on behalf of Lord Salisbury, laid down. When at last, in 1892, Mr. Balfour brought in his Bill, it proved to be a very strange measure. Its author, or sponsor, was not enamoured of it. He did not, he confessed, think it nearly so valuable as a Coercion Act, or a Light Railways Act. To insure the representation of minorities, meaning Unionists, he proposed the cumulative vote, because it was allowed in England for School Boards. "I think," he observed philosophically, "that there are great advantages in doing a stupid thing which has been done before, instead of a wise thing which has not yet been done." After this the House could hardly be expected to listen in a serious mood, or even in decorous silence, while the Minister explained how two Judges might find a County Council guilty of various offences, and send it about its business, or rather prevent it from doing any business at all. This curious measure was read a May 19.
second time by a large majority, and then no more was heard of it. It was not meant to pass. Free

[1] Lord Salisbury. [2] Sir Michael Hicks-Beach.

1892. education, however, was extended as a matter of course to Ireland, where it was strictly sectarian, and a Small Holdings Act, which wanted only driving power, was passed for England. By this statute, in most respects sensible and judicious, the Public Works Loan Commissioners were empowered to lend money for the purchase of land in quantities of not more than fifty acres, and of not less than one. The County Councils were to be the borrowers, so that the Government would have the security of the rates. The security of the County Councils would be the land itself. The purchaser was to pay a fourth of the price at once; another fourth would be a perpetual rent-charge on the soil; and the remaining half would be paid off by yearly instalments. Three-fourths of the amount which the landlord agreed to take he would receive at once from the County Council, so that he would not for a moment be out of pocket. These holdings might be let to labourers. But no single labourer could obtain more than ten acres. When the rent of the holding was £25 or more, the tenant might build a cottage on it; and if he could not afford the outlay, the County Council might build it for him. So far as it went, this legislation was well conceived, and thoughtfully carried out. The defect was the absence of any right in the local authority to enforce a sale. No doubt it is a strong thing to say that one man must sell his land to another, or even to a public body, for private purposes. In the present case it might be called class legislation, because only labourers would take advantage of it. But then the whole argument for the Bill was the difficulty, often the impossibility, of getting the landlord to part with the smallest fraction of his estate, except at a prohibitive price. Mr. Chamberlain had always strongly urged the necessity of compulsion, but on this point his influ-

Small Holdings Act.

ence with the Government failed, and the Act as passed was a voluntary one. The Government would not trust the Councils they had created themselves, although, so far as they were political at all, they were, outside London, Conservative rather than Liberal. To their idle fear of confiscation Ministers sacrificed the utility of their scheme, which, without compulsory powers, was little more than window-dressing for the General Election. 1892.

CHAPTER X

THE SECOND HOME RULE BILL

1892. THE Parliament of 1886 was dissolved by Proclamation on the 26th of June 1892. In preparation for this event a gigantic meeting of the greatest importance was held at Belfast. Twelve thousand Protestant delegates attended from all parts of Ulster, and cheered until they were hoarse the Duke of Abercorn's declaration that they would never have Home Rule. This was a practical response to the Prime Minister's argument on the platform of the Primrose League that any attempt to coerce Ulster by military force was an outrage which would rend society in two. Some Liberals talked nonsense about contingent rebellion. There is no such thing. There cannot be rebellion against a law which has not passed and an authority which does not exist. Mr. Gladstone, with unusual bluntness, described those who would possibly resist a possible Act of Parliament as "fools and rogues." Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, with happier humour, talked of the Unionists as growing more and more Ulsterical every day. But the matter was far too serious to be settled by denunciation, or by jokes. "It is impossible," says Mr. Clayden most justly, "to understand the course of public events in the month which preceded the General Election without taking full account of this Ulster movement."[1]

The Belfast meeting. June 17.

[1] *England under the Coalition*, p. 581.

It deeply stirred the Nonconformists of England and Scotland, upon whom the Liberal party has always relied. There were, of course, in the strict sense of the word, no Nonconformists in Ireland, because there was no established Church. But Ulster contained thousands of Presbyterians, in full religious sympathy with British Dissenters, and they appealed in forcible language to the unendowed Protestantism of Great Britain. They hoisted the flag of No Popery, which has never since the reign of Queen Mary been hoisted in vain. "Being at a distance," they said, "you possibly do not appreciate the power which the Roman Catholic bishops and priests have over the great bulk of Irish Roman Catholics, and the determination which they display to compel obedience to their direction in temporal as well as spiritual matters." This statement was not merely framed in good faith. If some allowance be made for excitement and exaggeration, it was true. With the fall of Parnell, the power of the priests rose to a height it had never reached before. They had vindicated that particular form of morality which is held most sacred by Catholics and by Irishmen. Having regained all, and more than all, their old authority, they were not the men to let it drop. Parnell's nominal successor was a Catholic, Mr. Redmond. His real successor was the Church of Rome, with which Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal party seemed to be in strange and unnatural alliance. 1892.

The Liberals had their answer to these threats, taunts, and prophesies. They contended, with sound logic, that the priests drew their political influence from their position as champions of popular rights, and that the establishment of an Irish Legislature would be the best means for restricting them to their spiritual functions, with which the most bigoted Protestant did not desire to interfere. "Rome Rule."

1892. When a priest could no longer be a Home Ruler, he would be a priest and nothing more. This argument, though it involved an element of prediction, was sensible and reasonable enough. But it did not counteract the persuasive force of the Protestant appeal, or the imposing demonstration of Ulster Unionism, sanctified as it was by psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. These Ulstermen might be narrow-minded; they might, in their references to the Bible, be thinking more of the Old Testament than of the New; but they were beyond all question honest and sincere. Their own treatment of Catholics in Belfast, which could not be reconciled with Christian principles, may have inspired them with some of the dread which they felt. Feel it, however, they undoubtedly did, and they succeeded in communicating their apprehensions to the Nonconformist Churches of this island.

Salisbury's address.

The day after the dissolution Lord Salisbury, who never cared much for precedent, took a novel step. Being a Peer, and having no constituents, he issued an Address to the whole of the electors of the United Kingdom. If in so doing he infringed the privileges of Parliament, there was no one who could call him to account. Although he naturally mentioned the social reforms, neither few nor trifling, which his Ministry had accomplished, he laid most stress upon the danger which menaced the Protestants of Ulster. He called it "the subjection of their prosperity, their industry, their religion, their lives, to the absolute mastery of their ancient and unchanging enemies"; that is to say, their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen. "I pray," he added, "that you may be guided to shrink from this great outrage on liberty, on gratitude, and on good faith."

Mr. Gladstone, at the same time, now eighty-two years of age, astonished the country by the

vigour of his speeches in Midlothian and elsewhere. 1892.
But the enthusiasm of his followers even in Scotland had waned. He had been for six years so much absorbed in the Irish question that he scarcely gave a thought to any other political subject, except so far as it might help or hinder Home Rule. Since the Irish Nationalists had shown their confidence in him by following his counsels even against their own chosen leader, Mr. Parnell, he had felt still more deeply than before his duty to Ireland, and his solemn obligation to spend the rest of his working life in her service. The Church of Scotland, which in his heart of hearts he did not regard as a Church at all, he was quite willing to disestablish if the people wished it. It was a question for them, not for him. The special claims of labour did not appeal to him. His service to the working classes, an inestimable one, was the removal of taxes on food, and on the raw material of industry. He had no belief in limiting by law the hours of work for mines or for factories. He remained in public life for one purpose only, and though he formally adopted the Newcastle Programme, he had very little to do with framing it. Even on the subject of Home Rule he was not communicative. He had been pressed by some of his younger followers, by Mr. Asquith in particular, to give at least an outline of the new Home Rule Bill. But beyond an assurance, really made some years before, that Ireland would continue to be represented at Westminster, and an undertaking not to dissolve Parliament if the Lords rejected his measure, he would not go. Home Rule was to be the first business of the new Parliament if there were a Liberal majority. Coercion was to be abandoned. After Home Rule the other items in the Newcastle Programme could be taken up one by one.

Gladstone's reticence.

1892. The General Election. At the opening of Parliament in August 1886, the Unionist majority had been 115. Losses at by-elections and the return of a few Liberal Unionists to Mr. Gladstone had since reduced it to 67. This was wiped out at the beginning of July by the polls in the boroughs. One Cabinet Minister, Mr. Ritchie, lost his seat in London. On the other hand, Mr. Morley, though he retained his seat for Newcastle, was only second on the poll, a local Conservative being placed above him. Birmingham was solid for the Parliamentary Union. The counties were more favourable to the Opposition than the towns, and Mr. Arch, the best friend of the agricultural labourers, regained the seat in Norfolk which he had lost six years before. But the greatest and the most disagreeable surprise for the Liberal party was the election in Midlothian.

The result in Midlothian. At the first contest after the enlargement of the franchise in 1885 Mr. Gladstone's majority was nearer five thousand than four, and in 1886 there had been no contest at all. Since that time the constituency had seen little of their illustrious representative, and a genial, popular soldier, Colonel Wauchope, who afterwards died gloriously at Magersfontein, had been conducting a diligent canvass on the Conservative side. He did not quite succeed in turning Mr. Gladstone out. But he brought down his majority below seven hundred, and this moral victory, as it might well be called, encouraged Unionism throughout Scotland almost as much as if the seat had been won. When all the returns had come in, it was seen that the Home Rulers, British and Irish combined, had a majority of forty against the Unionists, or, deducting the Speaker, of forty-one. The Conservatives had lost fifty-seven seats and the Liberal Unionists twenty-three, which was a figure out of proportion to their numbers. The Irish Nationalists remained sub-

stantially as they were. The ranks of labour received two rather remarkable additions. Mr. Burns, Member for Battersea, though calling himself a Socialist and proclaiming his independence of both parties, acted harmoniously with the forces of Liberalism. Mr. Keir Hardie, Member for South-West Ham, took his own line, and even when he voted with the Liberals, lost no opportunity of denouncing them. The personal followers of Parnell were almost wiped out. Only nine came back to Westminster. But among them was their leader, Mr. Redmond, one of the most powerful debaters in the House of Commons. 1892.

The result of this election was quite as unsatisfactory as the result in 1885. No party had a majority of the whole House. Conservatives, including Liberal Unionists, outnumbered Liberals, and the balance was held by the Irish vote. One result of not letting Ireland govern herself was that she governed England. Lord Salisbury's Cabinet decided in the circumstances, with perfect propriety, not to resign before the meeting of Parliament. They represented the largest party in the House of Commons, and they were entitled to hold their places until a combination of their adversaries could remove them. This operation, however, was speedily performed. On the 4th of August Mr. Peel was once more elected Speaker, and on the 8th Mr. Asquith moved, as an amendment to the Address, that the House had no confidence in the Ministers of the Crown. After two nights' debate, in the course of which Mr. Gladstone spoke at length without saying much, the amendment was carried by 350 votes against 310, the largest division ever known, and Lord Salisbury at once tendered the resignation of the Government to the Queen. Her Majesty sent for Mr. Gladstone, and he became Prime Minister for the fourth time. Only his indomitable

The new Parliament.

Defeat of the Government.

1892. courage, and unshaken belief in the justice of his
Gladstone's position. cause, could have supported him in undertaking the task. Although his intellect was unimpaired, and his eloquence unabated, he was old and deaf. He was at the mercy of the Irish vote, one-fourth of which was almost avowedly hostile. England had declared emphatically for maintaining the Act of Union, which, though in law equivalent to any other statute, was historically a compact that could not in fairness be rescinded without the consent of both parties thereto. It was absolutely certain that any Home Rule Bill which the Irish Nationalists could accept would be rejected by the House of Lords, and extremely improbable that they would ever pass such a measure until another appeal to the country had produced much more decisive results. Nevertheless, with unflagging energy, the veteran statesman set about forming an Administration. One initial obstacle overcome, the re-
Lord Rosebery. mainder of this task was plain sailing. When Lord Rosebery had been induced again to take the Foreign Office, there was no lack of efficient material for the others. Mr. Morley at the Irish Office was as indispensable as Lord Rosebery, or as Mr. Gladstone himself. The Cabinet was strengthened by the new Home Secretary, Mr. Asquith, the new President of the Local Government Board, Mr. Fowler, and the new Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Acland. Mr. Bryce and Mr. Mundella also entered the Cabinet as Chancellor of the Duchy and President of the Board of Trade. Mr. Morley's re-election for Newcastle was not unnaturally opposed by the Unionists, as he had been far behind his Conservative colleague at the General Election. But
Aug. 25. he obtained a handsome majority, and the Cabinet were free to consider during the recess how the Irish question should be approached.

But before any progress could be made with Home Rule, the Cabinet met suddenly at the end of September to consider the news from East Africa. The East African Company were at the end of their resources, and found it impossible to maintain without assistance their missionary stations in Uganda. Many Liberals, and some members of the Cabinet, were for leaving Uganda to itself. Lord Rosebery, however, was so strongly opposed to a policy of evacuation that he would have resigned rather than carry it out, and as Foreign Secretary he had his way. The original grant of a charter to the Company may have been wise or foolish, though the successful energy of Captain Lugard[1] had gone far to justify it. But public opinion in Great Britain, especially in Scotland, would certainly not have tolerated the abandonment of the missionaries, who were in danger of massacre if British protection was withdrawn from them. An expedition of inquiry under Sir Gerald Portal was sent out to advise the Government at home, and perhaps also to reconcile discordant opinions in the Government. Meanwhile Uganda could not be left to anarchy, and the grant to the Company was continued till the end of the financial year.

1892. Uganda.

Mr. Asquith, as Home Secretary, had to deal at once with the alleged right of meeting in Trafalgar Square. He received the spokesmen of the Metropolitan Radical Federation, and told them the very sensible conclusion at which he had arrived. Bound by the law which Mr. Justice Charles had laid down, he treated the question as one of favour, and not of right. He thought it, as the public thought it, inexpedient that the Square should be used for meetings when they were likely to interfere with the traffic. Since there was very little

Trafalgar Square. Oct. 19.

[1] Afterwards Sir Frederick Lugard.

1892. traffic on Sundays, and on Saturday afternoons, he thought that meetings might be allowed at these times, by arrangement with the First Commissioner of Works[1] and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.[2] By obstinately adhering to the letter of the law, Mr. Matthews had all but produced a violent collision between the soldiers and the crowd. By a judicious compromise Mr. Asquith settled the question, and the privilege which he conceded was tranquilly enjoyed without molestation or disturbance.

Ireland. The Chief Secretary for Ireland was less fortunate in his endeavours to pacify that country. His ability and his goodwill were alike conspicuous. But he lacked a British majority in Parliament behind him. He at once withdrew such proclamations as were still in force under the Crimes Act, leaving that statute a dead letter. To deal with the evicted tenants was more difficult. Nothing positive or definite could be done without an Act of Parliament. But a small Viceregal Commission was appointed to examine the facts on the spot, and advise the Lord-Lieutenant[3] about the best method of reinstating these men, whose plight, besides being pitiful, was dangerous to social order. The Chairman was Mr. Justice Mathew. Sir James Mathew, though an English Judge, was an Irishman, who had strong sympathies with the Nationalist cause. In his opening remarks he reflected severely upon the conduct of Lord Clanricarde as a landowner, and he afterwards declined to let the landlords' counsel cross-examine the tenants. Thereupon ensued an unseemly altercation between the Chairman and the Irish lawyers, whom he accused, not without reason, of gross impertinence. One of the Commissioners resigned, as a protest against the

The evicted tenants.

Oct. 14.

Sir James Mathew's Commission.

Nov. 7.

[1] Mr. Shaw-Lefevre. [2] Sir Edward Bradford.
[3] Lord Houghton, afterwards created Earl of Crewe.

Chairman's observations, and the landlords refused to appear any further, by counsel or at all. Unionist feeling in Ireland was further embittered by Mr. Morley's release of four men who had been sent into penal servitude for the manslaughter of Inspector Martin at Gweedore. This was the lamentable case, already described, where a priest[1] had been arrested as he came out of church from celebrating Mass, and the hapless Inspector had given the most intense provocation to an excitable crowd. Nevertheless, Mr. Morley was accused of condoning murder, as he had been accused of perpetrating it at Belfast in 1886 when he employed the police to repress the fury of a Protestant mob. 1892. Dec. 23.

Outside Ireland there was a "condition of England question," and the mass of pauperism in London was forcibly depicted by a pious self-sacrificing philanthropist, William Booth, General of the Salvation Army. He raised a hundred thousand pounds from the charitable public, and established a "farm colony" at Hadleigh in Essex, where he employed three hundred men. The plan of paying from public sources pensions to the aged and deserving poor, originated by Mr. Blackley,[2] was brought under the notice of the Government, who appointed a Royal Commission, with Lord Aberdare as Chairman, and the Prince of Wales as a member, to inquire "whether any alterations in the system of poor law relief are desirable in the case of persons whose destitution is occasioned by incapacity resulting from old age, or whether assistance could otherwise be afforded in those cases." If this Commission led to no practical result, and proved the extreme difficulty of dealing with the subject, it showed also that the Government could not be expected to legislate on such a matter without previous and exhaustive research. More im- Old age pensions.

[1] Father McFadden.

[2] See vol. iv. p. 372.

1892. mediately practical steps were taken by the Home Secretary and the President of the Board of Trade. Mr. Asquith appointed women to inspect women's workshops, thereby ensuring for the first time that they should be properly inspected. Mr. Mundella established a Labour Department in the Board of Trade, of which Mr. Giffen,[1] the eminent statistician, became the first head, for the collection, digestion, and publication of statistics concerning labour. A correspondent was appointed for every large town in Great Britain, to keep the Department informed of its industrial condition, and a *Labour Gazette* was issued monthly at the price of a penny, containing information useful to the working classes. Mr. Mundella believed that strikes were often due to ignorance, and in selecting Mr. Burnett, formerly a working man, as Chief Labour Correspondent, he gave his new enterprise the best possible start.

The most hardly worked of all the Ministers was the Foreign Secretary. In the month of October 1892 M. Waddington, the French Ambassador, who had been at Rugby and Cambridge, but was nevertheless a scholar of European reputation, believing that Mr. Gladstone's return to power was from his point of view opportune, approached the British Government with the object of fixing a limit to the British occupation of Egypt. Lord Salisbury had done his best to fix one, and it was French diplomacy that thwarted him. Mr. Gladstone would have been equally willing. Lord Rosebery refused to discuss the subject, and his decision was soon justified by events. At the beginning of 1893 Tewfik Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt, died, and was succeeded by his son Abbas, a lad of seventeen. Abbas's sudden elevation turned his head, and in the middle of January he dismissed three Ministers who were regarded as

The crisis in Egypt.

[1] Afterwards Sir Robert Giffen.

friendly to England. The second fiddle was not Lord Cromer's favourite instrument, and he altogether declined to play it on this occasion. In refusing to recognise the Khedive's nominees for the vacant post he was energetically supported by the Foreign Office, and Lord Rosebery wrote in the name of the Cabinet that, so long as England occupied Egypt, her advice must be followed by the Egyptian Government. A third Premier was found, neither the one dismissed nor the one substituted for him, and by this compromise the credit of the Khedive was saved. But the British troops in Egypt were reinforced from Malta and Gibraltar at the beginning of February, as a symptom that the resources of the British Empire were at the disposal of Lord Cromer. 1893.

When Parliament met on the last day of January 1893, the Queen's Speech, despite a few references to foreign affairs, was capable of comparison, and was compared, with the Newcastle Programme. Three Bills were mentioned in a single paragraph, which twelve years afterwards had not one of them been turned into Acts. But it was perfectly well known that the Home Rule Bill must occupy the greater part of the Session, and the Unionists took every opportunity of putting it off by discussing other things. They were not alone. Mr. Redmond, the Leader of the Parnellites, attacked the Home Secretary for not having released the imprisoned dynamiters, except one man of whose connection with actual outrage there had always been a shadow of doubt, and another for whose liberation Mr. Matthews had previously arranged. Mr. Asquith took a firm and bold line. Assuming the entire responsibility for a decision which rested with him alone, he declared that so long as he remained at the Home Office no dynamiter need expect more favourable treatment than any other prisoner in

The case of the dynamiters.

1893. Her Majesty's gaols. Although the entire Nationalist party voted with Mr. Redmond, and perhaps could scarcely do otherwise, they must have felt that the crime of which these wretches had been guilty was quite as dangerous to Nationalists as to any other portion of the community. The strength and courage shown by Mr. Asquith on this occasion were equally advantageous to the Government and to himself.

The second Home Rule Bill.

It was not till the 13th of February that Mr. Gladstone could introduce his second Home Rule Bill, which had been anxiously and carefully drafted by a strong Committee of the Cabinet, including Lord Herschell, Lord Spencer, and Mr. Morley.[1] It proved to be substantially the same as the first, except that the Irish Members, reduced from a hundred and three to eighty, would be able to vote at Westminster on any Imperial question, or any question affecting Ireland. The debate on the first reading, against which the Opposition did not divide, was chiefly remarkable for the readiness and power exhibited by a couple of lawyers. Sir Edward Clarke, in replying to the Prime Minister's speech, point by point, upon the spot, showed Members of a new Parliament what debating, as distinguished from speech-making, really means. One of these Members, however, required no instruction. Mr. Edward Blake, a Canadian statesman of high repute, who had for some years led the Liberal Party in the Dominion, until it became too Separatist for his taste, had been returned for South Longford at the General Election. He was by blood a pure Irishman, and he undertook the welcome task of answering Mr. Chamberlain's criticisms on the Bill. He represented the general tendency of Colonial opinion, as against the somewhat insular dogmatism which Mr. Chamberlain's

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 497.

speeches at that period displayed. Although the Bill was read a first time on the 17th of February, the second reading could not be moved before Easter, and was not proposed till the 6th of April. Mr. Gladstone then explained that Ireland's contribution to the Imperial revenue, which was eight and a half per cent, would by the Bill be fixed at four per cent. There would be no taxation without representation, for Ireland would still send Members to St. Stephen's, and thus the chief constitutional objection to the Bill of 1886 had been removed. On the other hand, retention raised more difficulties than it solved, and the modified arrangement proposed by the Bill of 1893 was among all imaginable methods the fullest of practical inconvenience. No Liberal Unionist was restored to the Liberal Party by Mr. Gladstone's reluctant change of front, which proved to be a tactical blunder. Discussion proceeded on the old familiar lines, and the maiden speech of Mr. Michael Davitt, who had spent nearly a decade of his life in penal servitude, was welcomed as a novelty with eager interest. But even Mr. Davitt could say nothing new, and the attention he excited was purely personal. He was perhaps the most genuine rebel who ever sat in the House of Commons, Smith O'Brien not excepted, and his fervent patriotism made even Unionists ask themselves whether a system which classed such a man with the lowest criminals could be absolutely perfect. 1893. Mr. Michael Davitt.

The Bill was read a second time on the 22nd of April by a majority of 43. But the debate on the second reading, though it lasted for more than a fortnight, was only a preliminary skirmish. The position of the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists was very strong. They had an English majority, and a British majority, which were being constantly overridden by Irish votes. Their own discipline

1893. was excellent, their attendance from day to day was surprisingly regular, and they determined to fight in Committee with the effective weapon of time. Ministers may make arguments. Time they cannot make, whereas any articulate individual can talk against it. The Leader of the regular Opposition, Mr. Balfour, frankly announced that he should vote for any amendment which would improve the Bill, and for any amendment which would destroy it. Mr. Courtney's services as a strong and impartial Chairman would have been priceless. Unfortunately he was a Unionist, and his place was given to an amiable lawyer,[1] popular in his profession, but unsuited for the control of tumultuous debates. On the first night of Committee the Chief Secretary for Ireland[2] moved the closure before ten o'clock, the Chairman accepted it, and the Prime Minister took a futile division against a motion for reporting progress at midnight which carried itself. After such an evening there was no hope of compromise, or of reasonable give and take. Both sides were equally ready to fight it out all the summer, one of the hottest and driest summers ever known. The Government accepted an amendment from Sir Henry James, providing that "notwithstanding anything in this Act contained, the supreme power and authority of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters, and things within the Queen's dominions." But this acknowledgment met with no response, and it soon became evident that within the limits of an ordinary Session the Bill could not, without extraordinary means, be passed. The Prime Minister displayed a vigour, eloquence, ingenuity, and rapidity of perception which seemed miraculous

Obstruction in Committee.

May 8.

[1] Mr. Mellor. [2] Mr. Morley.

to those who heard and saw them. But he was accused, not without plausibility, of obstructing his own Bill. His vast range of knowledge, and a memory almost unimpaired by time, enabled him to pour out upon any amendment a flood of anecdote, argument, irony, illustration, which often delighted the Committee. Pleasure, however, is not business, and the Bill dragged. The Solicitor-General,[1] a great lawyer, skilled in equitable jurisprudence, whom Mr. Gladstone often summoned to his assistance, was almost unintelligible to mere Members of Parliament, and "Rigby-baiting" became a favourite pastime with the Opposition. 1893.

By the end of June the Prime Minister was driven to propose a time-limit, which became familiarly known as the "gag." He could, of course, quote as precedents the Crimes Bill of 1887, which was urgent, and the Parnell Commission Bill of 1888, which was not. But the curtailment of debate on a great constitutional measure was hard to defend, and the Government could scarcely plead one of their strongest reasons, which was Mr. Mellor's extreme reluctance to give the closure, except on particular amendments. The time-limit was established, or the gag was applied, by a majority of thirty-two. In the middle of July, while this system prevailed, Mr. Gladstone abandoned what had come to be known as the "in and out clauses." They had been so riddled with criticism from various quarters that they were acknowledged to be unworkable, and the Government fell back upon the simpler, if less logical, principle that the Irish Members should continue, after Ireland had a Parliament of her own in Dublin, to vote at Westminster on all subjects as before, the only difference being a reduction of their number by twenty-three. This change, though accepted by the House, was The "Gag."

[1] Sir John Rigby.

1893. to cost the Government dear. Mr. Robert Wallace, Liberal Member for East Edinburgh, who had been in former days an eloquent preacher in the Church of Scotland, and afterwards editor of the *Scotsman*, inveighed against the weakness and tergiversation of Ministers with pungent sarcasm and brilliant wit. Much more serious, however, than anything which happened in Parliament was the effect produced outside. The Unionists found themselves provided with a better point for the platform than they ever had before. Ireland was not merely to govern herself. She was to govern England and Scotland too. Nothing told more forcibly at by-elections than this palpable hit, whereas the "in and out clause" was capable of defence, and not easy to understand. What good this country got by governing Ireland was a question never answered, and seldom asked.

Tumult in the House.

In the House the successive stages of the weekly gag produced intense irritation, which at the end of July broke out in a scene of wild disorder. Just before ten o'clock, the time appointed for the close of debate, Mr. Chamberlain ended a speech of peculiar bitterness by comparing Mr. Gladstone's followers with the flatterers of Herod, who said, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." An Irish member shouted "Judas" several times, and an English Member moved that his words be taken down. This proposal, since officially declared to be obsolete, was disregarded, and at ten o'clock the Chairman rose to put the question. Not a syllable that he said could be heard, and when he put it the second time, there was as much noise as ever. Many Members, including the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, went out into the lobbies to vote. Others remained in violent altercation, and blows, though not of a serious kind, had actually been struck when the

Chairman, feeling himself powerless, sent for the Speaker. The Speaker was in a very difficult position. For he had of course not seen what happened, and conflicting versions were emulously offered him. But his dignity and presence, his perfect command of language and of temper, aided perhaps by a sense of shame on both sides of the House, succeeded in calming the unruly passions which had been evoked, and by general consent no further reference was made to a painfully humiliating incident. On the stage of Report the time-limit was again adopted, though eighty-two days were occupied in the discussion of the Bill. This was continued throughout August until the third reading was carried on the 1st of September by a majority of thirty-four. Then it went to the Lords. 1893.

The Bill in the Lords.

Never in its history, not even when the Irish Church Bill came up from the House of Commons in 1869, had the House of Lords presented so eager and stirring an aspect as it showed when Lord Spencer moved the second reading of the Home Rule Bill on the 5th of September 1893. At a date when Parliament scarcely ever sits, and when hundreds of legislators, hereditary or elected, are usually in pursuit of partridges or grouse, the red benches were crowded as they had not been crowded before. A quarter of a century had added largely to the number of Peers, and on that autumn evening many a strange face must have perplexed the door-keepers. As the Liberal Unionists sat on the same side with other Liberals, the vast disparity of forces was not visible to the outward eye. But the fate of the Bill was never for a moment in doubt, whereas no one quite knew what would happen to the Irish Church Bill until the principal amendments of the Lords had been surrendered to the Commons. While, however, the absence of uncertainty deprived the occasion of all speculative

1893. interest, the debate was so lofty and well sustained as to keep up and even increase the just fame of the few Peers who count. No one could have opened it with more dignity and authority than Lord Spencer, who had saved Ireland at a critical moment from murderous anarchy and civil war. His conversion to Home Rule in 1886 had told even more than Mr. Gladstone's with quiet and reflective minds. The Opposition, on the other hand, were equally fortunate, and equally wise, in choosing the Duke of Devonshire to move the rejection of the Bill. The Duke, while still in the House of Commons, had sacrificed his official career to maintenance of the Parliamentary Union, and he carried the more weight with reasonable men because it was always to reason, never to passion, that he appealed. His argument that many clauses of the Bill had not been discussed in the other House showed a curious want of political foresight, inasmuch as successive Governments have had to deal with obstruction in the same way. But there was no possible answer when he said that in throwing out the Bill the Peers would be expressing rather than opposing the public opinion of England. The Duke of Argyll, though not comparable with the Duke of Devonshire for argumentative power, described with the eloquence of a genuine orator the cabins of Antrim, lighted by the setting sun, as they could be seen from the west coast of Scotland, and pointed the moral that the two islands were the same country. But the chief honours of this memorable debate fell to the lawyers. From Lord Chancellor Herschell came the ablest, the clearest, the most persuasive, the most thoroughgoing, defence of the Bill. Its most damaging opponent was his Liberal predecessor on the woolsack, Lord Selborne. Lord Selborne had passed his eightieth birthday, and the notes prepared for

his speech were accidentally mislaid. Nevertheless, 1893.
he submitted the chief clauses of the Bill to an exhaustively elaborate criticism, framed in his coldly correct and academic English, without once pausing for a word, or an idea. The Lord Chancellor replied to him point by point, but with an evident consciousness that he was addressing rather the public than the House of Lords. When, at the close of the debate, the Chancellor had to put Sept. 8.
the question from the woolsack, he excited much laughter by declaring, in accordance with the precedents applicable to Government Bills, that the Contents had it. When the other Peers returned, the Not Contents were found to have it by a majority of more than ten to one.[1] Mr. Gladstone was himself responsible for the creation of more Peers than the minority contained. The two Archbishops, and twenty Bishops, voted against the Bill, though only the Bishop of Ripon, an Irishman,[2] spoke. No Bishop voted in its favour.

Although the House of Lords is not in the Public apathy.
constitutional sense a representative body, being composed by the accident of birth, or by Royal favour, yet four hundred Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Irishmen, even if chosen at random, would afford some indication of public opinion. This was the largest division ever taken in the Lords, and the Peers outside the Government who voted for the Bill might almost be counted on the fingers. Whatever might have happened to the measure, no such overwhelming disparity would have been possible if Home Rule had been in England a popular cause. Nor was the result of the vote followed by any display of public indignation. It had been universally expected, and it was received as a matter of course, whereas the rejection of the Reform Bill in 1832 brought the country to the

[1] Contents, 41; Not Contents, 419. [2] Dr. Boyd Carpenter.

1893. verge of civil war. The Government disappointed some of their Irish supporters by taking no step in consequence of this vote. The Prime Minister had announced, even before the General Election, that the loss of the Bill in the House of Lords would not make him dissolve Parliament, and to pass it through the House of Commons again would have wrecked the Newcastle Programme. No Bill in the Queen's Speech, which embodied the greater part of that programme, had yet been passed, except Mr. Mundella's modest and useful measure for shortening the hours of railway servants when in the opinion of the Board of Trade they were excessive. A Tory Democrat, Sir John Gorst, would have gone further, and fixed the outside limit at ten hours. But the men themselves, some of whom objected even to the mild interference of Mundella's Act, would almost certainly have rebelled against this drastic provision. Sir William Harcourt's Budget, which raised the Income Tax from sixpence to sevenpence in the pound, did not increase the popularity of the Government. Mr. Gladstone, on the other hand, maintained his financial reputation, and would have raised any one else's, by his masterly exposure of Bimetallism.

Bimetallism. 1893.

In 1893 trade was bad, and agriculture was worse. Under such conditions men are always favourably inclined to panaceas, and to general denunciation of something or somebody. In this case the panacea was a double standard of value, and the bugbear was gold. Mr. Chaplin persuaded himself and other landlords that Bimetallism would raise their rents, besides helping farmers out of their difficulties at nobody's expense. Men of very different calibre, such as Mr. Balfour, Mr. Courtney, and to some extent Mr. Goschen, were bitten with the notion that two things must vary less than one. But there is this important point to be

considered. If gold varies (and it varies infinitely less than silver), it affects fixed incomes, and fixed charges, but to the higgling of the market, to ordinary buyers and sellers, the variation is immaterial. Bimetallism would enable every debtor to cheat his creditor by paying his debts in a depreciated currency, the less valuable of two metallic standards. When the question was brought before the House of Commons, Mr. Gladstone disposed of it with a vigour, neatness, and point which astonished new Members of the House. His speech is a luminous treatise on the subject. But the argument which most impressed a practical audience was that if a change in the standard of value were known to be imminent every creditor would at once insist upon being paid the full amount of his claims in gold. In the City such a catastrophe would be worse than a revolution. Nowhere was Mr. Gladstone less popular. But after this speech the magnates of finance consoled themselves for having such a Prime Minister by the reflection that he was also First Lord of the Treasury. Bimetallism lingered long before it died a natural death in better times. But it never recovered from the effects of Mr. Gladstone's critical analysis.

1893. Feb. 28.

The depression of the coal trade produced more serious results. A demand on the part of the owners that wages should be reduced by ten per cent was followed by a strike, or lock-out, which gradually assumed gigantic proportions, spreading over Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the Midlands. Early in September a riotous attack was made at Featherstone Colliery, near Pontefract, upon the sheds and machinery of Lord Masham, who continued to work his pits by employing men outside the Unions. The local authorities were guilty of criminal negligence in allowing the police to be drafted from a notoriously disturbed neighbour-

The coal strike.

The Featherstone riots.

1893. hood to Doncaster Races, which most of the magistrates also attended. The Chief Constable himself was absent; and when a detachment of soldiers arrived from York, no justice of the peace could be found to read the Proclamation under the Riot Act. That formality, however, is not by law required when immediate danger to life or property exists, and the soldiers fired on the mob, killing two men, after damage to the amount of six thousand pounds had been done. For the loss of these lives, in any case deplorable, the Home Secretary was, then and long afterwards, bitterly attacked by Mr. Keir Hardie and other spokesmen of the working classes. But Mr. Asquith had no personal responsibility. When the local functionaries, whose duty it is to maintain the order of their district represent to the Government that they cannot do so without the assistance of an armed force, the Secretary of State, who has no control over the police beyond the metropolitan area, is under a legal obligation to order the despatch of troops, and Mr. Asquith was not more to blame, if blame there were, than his colleague, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, the Secretary for War. But in truth there was no blame at all, except for the original slackness of the local authorities. An impartial Commission, of which a distinguished judge, Lord
Dec. 7. Bowen, was Chairman, found that the soldiers were fully justified in firing, the condition of Ackton Colliery being such as would have authorised civilians to use rifles in its defence.

When this calamitous strike had lasted for fifteen weeks, inflicting vast inconvenience on the public, and great misery on the poor, who could not afford dear fuel, the Board of Trade represented to the Cabinet through Mr. Mundella that the continued scarcity of coal must have a disastrous effect upon the national revenue. The Cabinet

accordingly decided that the Prime Minister should invite delegates of both sides to meet in Conference under the neutral Chairmanship of Lord Rosebery. The proceedings were watched with the utmost anxiety and suspense by the entire nation. Fourteen owners met fourteen miners at the Foreign Office, and after six hours of private negotiation, which at first seemed hopeless, Lord Rosebery's tact so completely prevailed that a settlement was signed. The chief difficulty had lain in the obstinate refusal of the men even to consider a reduction of wages, which they held to have reached the irreducible point of affording a bare subsistence. In this contention they were successful, and it was agreed that they should go back to work on the old terms till the first of February 1894. After that date the wages were to be fixed by a Joint Board of Conciliation, fourteen a side, and a Chairman with a casting vote to be chosen from without; if possible, by the Board, if not, by the Speaker. For this great achievement, which terminated a situation full of peril to society, Lord Rosebery received, as he deserved, the principal share of credit. But it also redounded to the benefit of the Government, which, though prevented by their abortive Home Rule Bill from legislating for the people of the United Kingdom, had shown an unusual amount of executive vigour and discretion. Legislation is not everything. "I am called," said Sir Robert Peel, "an arbitrary Minister; but this country likes to be governed." The two members of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet who had hitherto distinguished themselves most, Lord Rosebery and Mr. Asquith, were equal to the exercise of authority, and not afraid of exercising it.

1893.

Nov. 17.

Lord Rosebery's mediation.

CHAPTER XI

GLADSTONE'S FAREWELL

1893. PARLIAMENT had done so little in the ordinary Session of 1893, which lasted from the 31st of January till the 22nd of September, that it met again for an Autumn Sitting on the 2nd of November to take up the Parish Councils Bill, and the Employers' Liability Bill. The Parish Councils Bill ought not to have been a contentious measure at all. It was in the hands of Mr. Fowler, President of the Local Government Board, the most conciliatory of men, and it really completed the Local Government Act of 1888. Mr. Ritchie had always intended, if time were given him, to establish District as well as County Councils. Mr. Fowler's Bill established District Councils and Parish Councils too. The District Councils would take over the administration of the poor law from the guardians, and act also as the sanitary authority. The Parish Councils would have power to acquire land for allotments, to enforce rights of way, to prevent arbitrary enclosure, and generally to protect the interests of the parishioners. In fact they would be secular vestries, with power over parochial charities, except such as were ecclesiastical in their nature. Both District and Parish Councils would be elected by a wide popular suffrage, without plural voting, women being eligible to sit on them, and unmarried women otherwise qualified being

The question of the Lords.

District and Parish Councils.

capable of voting for them. The Conservatives and Liberal Unionists did not divide the House against the second reading. But they discussed the Bill in Committee at such extreme length that the House sat through the Christmas Holidays into the new year. Mr. Gladstone stuck to his place on the Treasury Bench, and was gracefully congratulated by the Leader of the Opposition upon the occasion of his eighty-fourth birthday. January was far advanced before the Parish Councils Bill went up to the House of Lords, who read it a second time without a division, and began to consider it in Committee on the 1st of February. Their amendments were numerous and important. But all which had any real significance were rejected by the House of Commons, and the Lords gave way. Lord Salisbury was for standing firm. The Duke of Devonshire, however, declined on behalf of the Liberal Unionist Peers to risk the loss of a measure so popular with the agricultural labourers, and the Government scored a victory. 1893. 1894.

The case of the Employers' Liability Bill was very different. This Bill, introduced by Mr. Asquith, abolished what had been left in 1880 of the doctrine known as common employment,[1] and made employers liable to their workmen for the negligence of a fellow-workman, as well as for the negligence of a foreman, or their own. It was a Trade Union Bill, and its principle was perfectly sound, because it put the workman on the same footing as a stranger. The Lords inserted an amendment providing that the Bill should not apply in cases where the workmen by a majority agreed with the employer to a system of joint insurance approved by the Board of Trade. This was certainly not freedom of contract, as its promoters called it, for the majority could bind the Employers' Liability.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 153.

1894. minority. At the same time it had a reasonable appearance, it was not without support among Liberals in the House of Commons, and it would have withheld protection from no workmen not already in some degree protected. The Government would therefore have done wisely in the circumstances to accept it. But Mr. Asquith was under the influence of the Unions. He in his turn
Feb. 20 persuaded Mr. Gladstone, and the Bill was dropped.

Mr. Gladstone was at length feeling the weight of years. Infringement of a constitutional principle could still, however, revive him, not always with
The navy 1893. happy results. In the summer of 1893 a terrible
June 22. disaster to an ironclad battleship of the first-class, the *Victoria*, brought the condition of the navy
Loss of the *Victoria*. before the public with startling emphasis. By an error in signalling, for which Admiral Sir George Tryon was responsible, the *Camperdown*, in the course of naval manœuvres off the coast of Tripoli, ran down the *Victoria*, and sank her in fifteen minutes, with the Admiral himself, thirty officers, and three hundred and twenty men. One effect of this appalling catastrophe, unparalleled since the loss of the *Royal George*, which Cowper has immortalised, was to fix public attention upon the state of the fleet. The idea that it was not strong enough to resist the combined fleets of two other Powers took hold of the public mind, and it became known that the Sea Lords of the Admiralty were gravely dissatisfied, if not apprehensive. Lord George Hamilton, who had himself been at the
Dec. 19. Admiralty, brought the subject before the House of Commons, and moved that the navy ought to be increased. Mr. Gladstone rode the high horse. That the House should press the Government to spend more money, instead of checking the expenditure which Ministers wished to make, was in his eyes incompatible with the fitness of things. He

moved as an amendment that responsibility for the naval estimates rested solely with the advisers of the Crown, and carried it by such majority as the Liberal Whips could command. But people outside Parliament thought the matter too serious for such punctilios. They were anxious for the safety of British commerce, and for the maintenance of our supremacy at sea. The Cabinet, as well as the House of Commons, was divided, and Lord Spencer, then First Lord of the Admiralty, proposed a considerable addition to the estimates of his Department for the coming year. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Rosebery, supported him. The Chancellor of the Exchequer opposed him. Most of his other colleagues agreed with Lord Spencer, but the Prime Minister had not given way when in the middle of January he left London for Biarritz. A great change had come over him since the House of Lords destroyed the Home Rule Bill. His vitality and elasticity were diminished. His deafness was a serious disqualification. An injury done to his eye by a pellet thrown at him while he was driving through Chester in 1892 had resulted in cataract, and an operation would soon be necessary. The difference of opinion about naval estimates afforded an opportunity for a resignation which could be explained and justified on other grounds. There was indeed an alternative to which he rather inclined. The conflict between Lords and Commons had reached an acute stage. The Home Rule Bill had been thrown out. The Employers' Liability Bill and the Parish Councils Bill had been mutilated. But to this course, the course of Dissolution, suggested from Biarritz, Mr. Gladstone's colleagues would not consent, and he then determined to resign.

1893.

1894.

He returned from Biarritz on the 10th of February 1894, to find the Session which had begun on the

1894. Gladstone's resignation.

31st of January 1893 still dragging its slow length along. Nothing like it had been known before. Both sides were worn out; the House of Commons had sat in every month of the previous year except October; and Sir Henry James met with some sympathy from his opponents when he declared the new conditions of Parliamentary life to be intolerable. Nevertheless, it was regarded as essential that the Session of 1894 should begin almost as soon as the Session of 1893 came to an end; and, as a matter of fact, only a week separated the two. During that brief interval there was a mighty transition in the public life of England. On the 1st of March Mr. Gladstone held his last Cabinet, and took a solemn farewell of his colleagues, ending with the words, "God bless you all."[1] Afterwards he went down to the House of Commons, and delivered his last speech there. It was an announcement that the trifling changes in the Parish Councils Bill to which the Lords still adhered would be accepted, and a declaration, or prediction, that the grave differences between the two Houses could not continue. They must "go forward to an issue," in which the Government would "take fully, frankly, and finally the side of the House of Commons." The House of Commons outside the Cabinet did not know that this was the final Parliamentary deliverance, the last political will and testament, of the greatest man who had sat in it since the younger, if not since the elder, Pitt. Although Mr. Gladstone remained a member of Parliament till the Dissolution, he never entered the House of Commons again. Two days afterwards he tendered his resignation to the Queen, whom he had served for more than half a century in various offices and often in troublous times. Her Majesty expressed no regret at parting with him, and did

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii. p. 511.

not consult him about the choice of a successor. 1894.
Passionately loyal, and devoted to the throne, as he was, he felt the slight intensely. He felt also, even at the age of eighty-four, the deprivation of public work, the final and compulsory abandonment of his efforts for what he regarded as a true union with Ireland. But apart from the religious belief which always sustained him, he was never in want of intellectual resources, and, having translated Horace before he left office, he set himself immediately afterwards to bring out a new edition of Butler's *Analogy*.

Weakness of the Government.

It cannot be said that Mr. Gladstone left his party in confidence or strength. Their majority, though not yet seriously reduced through by-elections, was fluctuating and precarious. The attempt to get up an agitation against the House of Lords had been a failure. Mr. Acland, Vice-President of the Council, the ablest man who had held that office since Robert Lowe, and far more practical than he, had offended the clergy, and those for whom the clergy think, by insisting that the managers of "voluntary" schools should fulfil the requirements of the law. Sir William Harcourt had irritated the brewers and publicans by his Local Veto Bill, which he brought in without making a serious attempt to pass it. The loss of the Employers' Liability Bill, due quite as much to the Trade Unions as to the Government or the House of Lords, had chilled and discouraged the working classes. The Miners' Federation were annoyed by the failure of their Eight Hours' Bill, for which the Government provided time, but could not provide votes, though the Federation might have passed it if they would have agreed to exempt the counties of Northumberland and Durham. Much discontent, and even disgust, had been excited among Liberals at the war of extermina-

1894. tion waged during 1894 against the Matabeles in Charterland by the South African Company, with the consent and approval of Lord Ripon and the Cabinet. Lord Rosebery had brought the country to the verge of war with France for Siam, an independent country bordering French territory in Tonquin and British territory in Burmah, which had been invaded, and partially annexed, by the French Republic. Yet it could be plausibly alleged by the Opposition that France had taken as much Siamese territory as she wanted. It seemed as if every Minister did what he liked, and as if the Cabinet had no collective policy at all. When a statesman becomes Prime Minister at eighty-two for one purpose, and one purpose only, it is not surprising that his hold over general business should be fitful and slack. Public economy, true or false, appeared to be the solitary subject on which Mr. Gladstone could still assert himself, and it was economy that led him to resign. The news of his actual retirement, which was of course in its nature final, came as a shock to those of his followers outside the inner ring. They had lost what Lord Salisbury called, with singular felicity, "the most brilliant intellect ever devoted to the service of the State since Parliamentary Government began."

The lost Leader.

Mr. Gladstone's career has occupied so large a space in this work that to recapitulate it here would be superfluous. He left a void which could not be filled in Cabinet, in Parliament, and in the country. The political causes of his resignation were unknown, and the physical causes were sufficient. But Liberals had so long depended on the personal supremacy of one illustrious man that they were less amenable to mere discipline than the Whips would have desired. The chief of these Whips, Mr. Marjoribanks, was removed from the House

of Commons the day after Mr. Gladstone's resigna- 1894.
tion by the death of his father, Lord Tweedmouth, and thus the crook disappeared with the shepherd.

So soon as the Queen received Mr. Gladstone's resignation, Her Majesty at once, of her own accord, sent for Lord Rosebery. The choice was satisfactory to most of his colleagues, and they all agreed that they would serve under him. But one of them was bitterly disappointed, and did not conceal the fact. Sir William Harcourt, who came into public life while Lord Rosebery was at Eton, had confidently reckoned upon the succession, and the eagerness of the other Ministers to recognise a younger head was a blow which he keenly felt. Lord Rosebery, who was quite in his place at the Foreign Office, had never sat in the House of Commons, where Sir William Harcourt after Mr. Gladstone's retirement was the foremost figure. Although Harcourt acquiesced in the new arrangement, and undertook to lead the House, it was a very sombre acquiescence, and he never referred to the Prime Minister except by the title of his Peerage.[1] When Parliament met again on the 12th of March the new Prime Minister assembled his followers at the Foreign Office, and announced that there would be no change of measures or of principles. To the Irish question he declared himself "bound by every tie of honour and of policy." But when he came that very evening to speak in the House of Lords on the Address, he made an admission of which the Unionists took full advantage. "Before Irish Home Rule," he said, "is conceded by the Imperial Parliament, England,

The new Premier.

Lord Rosebery's admission.

[1] Lord Kimberley became Foreign Secretary in the place of Lord Rosebery; Mr. Fowler, Secretary for India; Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, President of the Local Government Board; and Mr. Herbert Gladstone, First Commissioner of Works. Lord Tweedmouth entered the Cabinet as Privy Seal, and was succeeded as Chief Whip by a young Welsh Radical, Mr. Thomas Ellis, too early lost to public life.

1894. as the predominant member in the partnership of the three kingdoms, will have to be convinced of its justice." The Unionists at once said that the Prime Minister had admitted the right of the Lords to reject the Home Rule Bill, and it was hard to put any other interpretation upon his words. Next day the Irish and the Radicals took their revenge.

Defeat of the Government.

Mr. Labouchere moved and carried an amendment to the Address against the legislative power of the Lords. Although the majority for this irregular proposal was only two, it put the Government in a most humiliating plight, and they were compelled, with the contemptuous assistance of the Conservatives, to negative their own Address as the only feasible plan for getting rid of the amendment. Seldom has a new Government received so sharp a rebuff, and it was not alleviated for the Prime Minister by the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had taken little pains to prevent it. But if Sir William Harcourt's lukewarm support of his nominal chief was open to criticism, and not very easy to defend, his Budget was the one great event of the political year.

Harcourt's Budget.

When Sir William Harcourt succeeded Mr. Goschen at the Treasury there were some who sneered. Although he had previously filled the same office for a few months in 1886, he had then made no impression, and his knowledge of finance was believed on good authority to be slender. In 1893 the whole time of the Government and of Parliament was absorbed by Home Rule. But in 1894 Sir William Harcourt's opportunity came, and he made a magnificent use of it. Being a supremely able man, surrounded by a permanent staff of the best financiers in Europe, he went to the root of the matter. Not since the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill, nearly eight years before, had a Chancellor of the Exchequer gone

below the surface, and enunciated radical principles of finance. Mr. Goschen was always plausible, and often ingenious. But his constitutional timidity, and the knowledge that behind him were seated the representatives of the landed interest, made his Budgets dull and tame. Sir William Harcourt, relying upon the common people, introduced a democratic Budget. He had to meet by increased taxation a deficit which considerably exceeded two millions, and that was not a promising start. He had recourse to the duties on succession, which had not been materially altered since Mr. Gladstone extended them to real property in 1853.[1] Large estates still paid too little, and small estates still paid too much. Sir William Harcourt therefore applied the principle of graduated taxation, from which Mr. Gladstone had always been averse, while at the same time he carried out one of Mr. Gladstone's favourite doctrines by making the legacy duty identical on real and personal estate. Unlike Lord Randolph Churchill, who would have taxed the heir in proportion to what he received,[2] Sir William Harcourt calculated the impost by the total value of the deceased person's estate. Property worth less than a hundred pounds would pay nothing at all. Above that figure, and below five hundred, it would be taxed upon only 1 per cent. Between five hundred and a thousand pounds the rate would be 2 per cent. From one thousand to ten thousand it would be 3 per cent, and so by easy stages it would rise to 8 per cent for the estates of millionaires, howsoever they might be divided. The ultimate gain to the Treasury from this reform was put conjecturally at four millions. But as it would only be one million for the first year, the income tax was provisionally raised from sevenpence to

1894.

April 16.

[1] See vol. i. pp. 293-295.

[2] *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, vol. ii. pp. 194-195.

1894. eightpence in the pound. On the other hand, the limit of total exemption from income-tax was fixed at a hundred and sixty pounds, ten pounds higher than before, while incomes between four and five hundred pounds would be relieved by an abatement of a hundred. By way of compensation to the revenue another sixpence a gallon would be put upon spirits, and another sixpence a barrel upon beer. This great Budget, the greatest since 1861,[1] was conducted through Parliament under extremely difficult and onerous conditions. The majority for the second reading of the Bill which embodied it was only fourteen. The Irish members disliked the additional duty on spirits, though it was limited to a single year. The duty on beer was of course resisted by "the trade," as brewers persist in calling themselves. Mr. Redmond and his little band of Parnellites had been converted from half-hearted supporters to whole-hearted opponents by the abandonment of the Home Rule Bill. The regular Opposition, thus made almost as numerous as the Ministerialists, attacked the Finance Bill in Committee with an ingenious pertinacity unsurpassed in the annals of legitimate obstruction. But to all his critics, small and large, the Chancellor of the Exchequer offered an indomitable spirit and an unfailing tact. Impetuous as he was by nature, he kept his temper in strict control. He managed the House of Commons by humouring it, and he never once invoked the closure to shorten debate. The Bill was one which the House of Lords could not, by the unbroken custom of more than two centuries, amend, and its errors must be corrected in the House of Commons, or not at all. If the people were taxed without the full and free consent of their representatives, it was possible that the taxes might not be paid without resistance to the

[1] See vol. ii. pp. 275-278.

law. Sir William Harcourt's wise and statesman- 1894.
like forbearance met with the result that it deserved. His Budget became law without material alteration, and the Lords made no attempt to hinder it, though the Duke of Devonshire did not conceal his dislike of its most prominent features. Seldom has a financial measure been so completely successful, or fulfilled so thoroughly the intentions of its promoters. Sir William Harcourt's successors, some of whom were his unsparing critics in 1894, have cheerfully acknowledged his services to the revenue, and not one of them has attempted to interfere with his scheme. Some landowners have by arrangements with their sons endeavoured to escape payment of a public charge, which was chiefly proposed for the increase of the navy, and a few have complied with the essential condition by utterly divesting themselves of ownership in life. By most of them the tax has been willingly paid, being in its nature equitable, and falling most lightly upon those least strong to bear it. The Budget finally established Harcourt's reputation as a financier, and was much the most important achievement of the legislative year 1894.

It was indeed almost the only one. A Bill reforming local government in Scotland by the establishment of District Councils north of the Tweed was carried with the aid of a Standing Committee, chiefly, though not exclusively, composed of Scottish members, and the rating of London was made more just because more general. But an Evicted Tenants Bill for Ireland, though passed by the House of Commons, was thrown out by the House of Lords, and every other measure of importance had to be dropped, including the Local Veto Bill, perhaps the most unpopular measure ever brought into the House of Commons. Meanwhile the position of the Government was

1894. becoming desperate. They could not carry their
Humiliation. legislative proposals, and the House of Lords treated them with open contempt. Their Home Secretary, Mr. Asquith, who thought clearly, and spoke incisively, described himself and his colleagues as "ploughing the sand." They remained, however, in their places, faithful to their followers, who pressed upon them the duty of going on. The Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, in a speech
Oct. 27. at Bradford, proclaimed to his party and to the public that the subject on which they would ask for the opinion of the constituencies was the House
The projected resolution. of Lords. Should the House of Lords retain their power of putting a veto upon Bills passed by the House of Commons, or should that right become obsolete, like the veto of the Crown? On this point the House of Commons would be invited to pass a resolution, and the resolution would be submitted to the people when Parliament was dissolved. No dissolution, however, followed, and the Government were naturally taunted, as most Governments have been, with place-holding timidity. The by-elections, which had hitherto been indecisive, began to go against them. Nevertheless they
1895. Feb. 5. met Parliament in 1895, and proceeded with the business of the Session in the ordinary way, as if they had never taken the offensive against the House of Lords. Politics are an uncertain game; and before the month of February was out the Government, which seemed tottering to its fall, had won a notable victory over a powerful anta-
The Indian cotton duties. gonist. Sir Henry James, who represented the town of Bury in Lancashire, protested on behalf of his constituents, and of the whole county, against the re-imposition of duties upon cotton goods imported into India. If the whole Opposition voted with Sir Henry James, and if Liberal Members from Lancashire joined them, the defeat of the

Government was assured. Most urgent appeals were sent out by the Whips on both sides, and the fate of the Cabinet, who were of course responsible for the acts of Lord Elgin in Council, hung in the balance. That in these circumstances votes should be altered by a speech was almost without precedent in the House of Commons. Such conversions had undoubtedly been made, but not when parties had been summoned to pronounce between the Ministry and the Opposition. This time, however, the wonder happened, the almost impossible thing was done. The Indian Secretary, Mr. Fowler, rose to the occasion, and spoke as he had never spoken before. Always a good Parliamentary debater, the more effective because he was never violent, he displayed in this emergency a dignified and commanding eloquence which made a profound impression upon all who heard it. The gist of his argument was that the new duties would not be Protective, because they would be accompanied by a counter-vailing excise. The ground of his appeal, which stirred the House to depths beyond the influence of party, was that every Member of Parliament was Member for India, and bound as such to act for the Indian people, who could not act for themselves. The motion was rejected by a majority of nearly two hundred, and the result was as creditable to the Minister as it was to the House. 1895.

After this brief and not inglorious episode the Government, represented for the purpose by Mr. Asquith himself, continued to plough the sand with a Bill for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England in Wales. Mr. Asquith also introduced more practical measures for amending the Factories Acts and the Truck Acts, which were referred to the Committee on Trade. Mr. Morley brought in an Irish Land Bill. But the Welsh Church Bill took up most of the time, The Welsh Church Bill.

1895. and gave the Opposition perpetual loopholes for attack.

Mr. Peel's resignation.

Another chance presented itself when the Speaker resigned. Mr. Peel had occupied the Chair for eleven years with conspicuous dignity and splendour. In the long list of First Commoners there was no greater name, unless it were Sir Thomas More's, and to succeed him was a difficult task. After considering, and rejecting, for reasons quite unconnected with personal fitness, the claims of Mr. Courtney, and of Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, who refused an office he desired rather than deprive his colleagues of his invaluable services, Ministers proposed Mr. Gully, Member for Carlisle, a lawyer of distinction both in London and on the Northern Circuit, who was little known in the House. Against him the Conservatives put up Sir Matthew Ridley, a country gentleman well versed in the practice of Parliament, and for the first time since 1835 there was a division upon the choice of a Speaker. Mr. Gully was elected by a majority of eleven, which, though quite enough to seat him in the Chair, was ominously small for the future of the Government. The days of the Government were indeed numbered, and it was time that they should be released from an almost intolerable position. Not only was their majority crumbling and dwindling. It had become uncertain whether at any given moment they had a majority at all. Sir William Harcourt could only carry an otherwise featureless Budget by taking off sixpence a gallon on spirits to please the Irish Nationalists. The same dangerous allies, being almost all Catholics, and all dependent upon Catholic votes, compelled Mr. Asquith in the Standing Committee on Trade to exempt Convent laundries, on grounds called religious, from the protection of his Factory Bill. A vote in Committee of Supply for setting up a

Mr. Gully's election.

April 10.

statue of Oliver Cromwell, "the greatest Prince who ever ruled England," along with Jameses and Charleses unfit to stand behind him, was bitterly opposed by the Nationalists, carried by a small majority, and ignominiously withdrawn at the stage of Report.[1] Much time was wasted over the Bill for the disestablishment of the English Church in Wales, which went too far for Mr. Gladstone,[2] and not far enough for Welsh Nonconformists represented by Mr. Lloyd-George. At last the end came in a sudden and startling way. 1895.

When Committee on the Welsh Church Bill was suspended at midnight on Thursday the 20th of June, the day on which Her Majesty began her happy reign, Ministerialists, who had acquired the habit of living from hour to hour, went home in the tranquil assurance of a respite till the following Monday. Sir William Harcourt, as Leader of the House, had agreed, for general convenience, to take Supply on Fridays, and for this particular Friday Army Estimates had been set down. The Secretary of State for War, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, was expected to make a statement of military policy, and in due course he made it. He had an important communication to lay before the Committee. By the exercise of infinite tact, courtesy, patience, and perseverance he had induced the Duke of Cambridge to resign the office of Commander-in-Chief. From both the front benches of the House competing torrents of eulogy were poured upon His Royal Highness, whose indefatigable energy was admitted by all. But he was not a Moltke, or even a Radetsky, and he had become obviously entitled to repose. When Mr. Balfour sat down, The end.

Retirement of the Duke of Cambridge.

[1] The statue was afterwards placed outside the walls of Parliament, but in convenient proximity to the House of Lords.

[2] He cancelled his pair with Mr. Villiers, which would have operated throughout Committee.

1895. after echoing the compliments of Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, the House emptied, and was left to the service party, formerly known as the Colonels. An amendment was moved to reduce the salary of the Secretary for War, on the ground that he had not supplied the army with a sufficient quantity of ammunition in the shape of cordite. A division was called at a quarter-past seven on this motion. Although the longest day of the year had arrived, it was in London a dull evening, and the atmosphere of the House was dim. The Ministerial lobby was first cleared, and this is an ominous sign, because it implies comparative paucity of numbers. But when the four tellers approached the table, the clerk, by some mistake, gave the paper with the figures to the Government Whip, Mr. Thomas Ellis. The gathered excitement was just beginning to subside when Mr. Ellis, after glancing at the paper, handed it to the Conservative Whip, Mr. Akers-Douglas. Mr. Akers-Douglas, who was not in the secret, could hardly believe his good fortune, and made as though he would return the document. But arithmetic is an exact science, and he had to read out the result. The Ayes to the right were 132. The Noes to the left were 125. The technical consequence of this vote was to diminish by one hundred pounds the sum payable to the Secretary of State for War. Its practical and intended consequences were to destroy the Government of Lord Rosebery and enforce an immediate dissolution. Mr. Campbell-Bannerman shut up his box with a snap, and moved to report progress, thus bringing Supply, and all contentious legislation, to a close. He insisted on resigning his office at once, and all his colleagues resigned with him.

Resignation of Lord Rosebery.

The Queen sent for Lord Salisbury, who formed a very strong Government, including the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Henry James,

and other Liberal Unionists of less note. Parliament was dissolved without delay, and at the General Election of 1895 the new Government obtained a large majority over Liberals and Nationalists combined. The Liberal rout was dire and disastrous. Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Morley both lost their seats. It is possible that the defeat would have been less overwhelming if Lord Rosebery had himself dissolved, and died, in a political sense, with harness on his back. A Government which comes in only to ask the country for a verdict has great advantages. Its predecessors have admitted their inability to govern, and some government there must be. In ordinary circumstances a snatched vote in a thin House might have been ignored. But cordite was an immaterial issue. The point was that the Government had no majority, and therefore could not go on. It was doubtful whether a vote of confidence could be carried. To stay being impossible, they had simply to choose the order of their going. By resignation they lost the chance of appealing to the country against the House of Lords, and an appeal was made against them, with much success, as a band of meddlesome fanatics, who wanted to rob the poor man of his beer. Sir William Harcourt's masterly finance did him less good than his Local Veto Bill did him harm. The able administration of Mr. Asquith and Mr. Acland, though it saved their own seats, was of no avail to the Government of which they were members. Lord Rosebery's foreign policy pleased his opponents better than his friends. Home Rule was at a discount, and the decision of the electors, though given on various grounds, must be held to have justified the House of Lords for throwing out Mr. Gladstone's Bill.

1895. The Liberal rout.

With the coalition of Conservatives and Liberal

1895. Conclusions.

Unionists in a single Government there opened a new chapter in the history of England, which other writers must record. As it is, I have been compelled to deal with many living persons whose careers are not yet finished, upon whom no complete judgment can, even provisionally, be passed. Lord Rosebery, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Chamberlain, to take three examples alone, are still on the political stage, and may be on it for many years to come. In 1895 the first of them went out of office, and the other two became colleagues in the same Cabinet. The Liberal party was then, and long remained, at a lower depth of impotence and misfortune than that to which it fell in 1886. Lord Rosebery's Premiership, though longer than Canning's, was transient and embarrassed. His principal colleague was not loyal. His own health was at that time uncertain, and he suffered from the terrible malady of sleeplessness. His Cabinet was divided on foreign policy, and he seemed to have lost faith in Home Rule. His foreign policy, in spite of Lord Kimberley's unfortunate blunder,[1] had been spirited and successful. When he resigned, our relations with France were, it is true, awkward and constrained. But Germany was satisfied, and the friendship of Russia, so important to the rulers of India, was secured. It was also Lord Rosebery's good fortune, the fruit of provident sagacity, to improve British relations with Japan, the rising Power of the Eastern World. His Government did not perish through any faults of its own. It had lasted longer than a precarious and dwindling majority of forty could have been expected to last. That it should have survived Mr. Gladstone's retirement more than a year is one of the strangest phænomena

[1] Lord Kimberley, as Foreign Secretary, made a treaty with France about the Congo, which had to be torn up, because it violated a previous arrangement with Germany.

in politics, and only to be explained by the dread of dissolution which all majorities feel. England, in the small local sense of the word, had never voted for Home Rule. She voted against it with great emphasis in 1886 and in 1895. The Government of 1892 should have aimed at a compromise. They had not the strength to enforce their policy upon a reluctant Legislature, and by attempting it they gave the House of Lords the opportunity to increase their power. There is always an immense fund of latent Conservatism in the English people, and with the collapse of Lord Rosebery's Administration it overspread the land. Mr. Gladstone had outlived not his popularity but his influence. His absorption in Irish politics estranged from him the public opinion of England, and to some extent of Scotland. A third General Election on Home Rule was too much for the British palate. With a Conservative majority, though it might not be ardent in reform, Ireland would not block the way, and public-houses would not be closed. John Bull, ignorant of the future, laid himself down again for a long rest. He was not thinking of Venezuela. He was not thinking of South Africa, to which Sir Hercules Robinson had returned as High Commissioner with faculties impaired by age. He was thinking of his business and his beer. He did not want the Irish to interfere with the one, or the teetotallers to interfere with the other. The Government which lasted from 1886 to 1892 had given personal offence to no one outside Ireland, and had passed some measures, such as the Local Government Act, of great public utility. Their peaceful tenure contrasted with the troubled reign of their successors, which was not half so long, and the electors determined to give the Unionists another chance. With that determination the influence of the Irish vote at Westminster and

1895.

1895. among the British electorate came for many years to an end. The numerical over-representation of Ireland was suffered to continue, for several reasons, of which the most practical was that the Irish members had become a neglectable quantity in the House of Commons. They had kept in office for nearly three years a Liberal Government which could do nothing for them in the sphere of legislation, not even pass a Land Bill. They had assisted in passing the Parish Councils Act of 1893, and the Finance Act of 1894. They remained supreme over five-sixths of Ireland, and vigilant in asserting the right of the Irish people to manage their own affairs. But at the same time, like sensible men, they took what they could get from the British Government, and then asked for more. The substitution of Lord Rosebery for Mr. Gladstone, though it chilled their hopes, they accepted as an inevitable change, relying upon Mr. Morley for their special representative in the Cabinet, and not forgetting the fact that almost every Englishman or Scotsman who goes to Ireland in an official character becomes at least half a convert to Home Rule. Mr. Morley, who was a Home Ruler before he went, also satisfied the exacting judgment of the official class by his administrative ability. Although the Government of 1892, which lasted without substantial interruption[1] till 1895, consisted of very able and thoroughly competent men, they occupied a false position. They could do nothing for Ireland, and they could do nothing without Ireland. The General Election of 1892, like the General Election of 1885, was made abortive by the Irish vote. Logical statesmanship would either deprive Ireland of the franchise, or give her Home Rule. British statesmanship,

[1] The resignation of Mr. Gladstone did technically put an end to it in 1894, but there was not a moment's real interregnum.

which is never logical, refuses to do either one or the other. Mr. Gladstone saw in 1895 the work to which he had consecrated ten years of his life apparently further from achievement than when he began. The House of Lords, which he had done so much both to oppose and to enlarge, was stronger than when he entered public life in 1833. The great party he had led for thirty years seemed to be drifting without a purpose or an aim, and clinging to scattered fragments of the Newcastle Programme. Lord Randolph Churchill was dead, and Mr. Balfour had long since become an orthodox Conservative. Tory democracy had fallen into the hands of Mr. Chamberlain, who attracted the working classes by proposals of compensation for accidents, and of sustenance from public funds if they lived to be old. He was the most valuable recruit that Conservatism ever drew from the Radical ranks, especially as the cloak of Unionism enabled him to call himself a Radical still. His old associates, of whom he had long washed his hands, had plenty of time to consider their position and re-form their shattered battalions. The swing of the pendulum, always a fallacy of imperfect observation, had been completely discredited by events, and nothing seemed in 1895 more remote than the return of a Liberal Government to power. John Bright's motto, "Only one Parliament within the United Kingdom," had been adopted by the people of England, the predominant partner. There was no longer, except in name, a party of Liberal Unionists. There were Unionists in office, and Home Rulers in opposition, without any prospect of changing sides. The best hope for the immediate future of the country lay in the fusion of Liberal and Conservative ideas, or of Tory and Radical ideas, in a Cabinet which contained Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain. Liberals who 1895.

1895. adhered to Home Rule could at least console themselves with the reflection that in fair weather and in foul they had stood by the ship. If instead of taking them into harbour, she had struck upon a rock, defeat was no disgrace, and neither of the two great parties between which Englishmen naturally divide themselves can suffer permanent defeat.

CHAPTER XII

THE NEW UNIONISM

THE seven years occupied by the most acutely controversial stage of Home Rule were years of advance, or at least of change, in the sphere of labour, and the industrial politics of the working classes. When Mr. Chamberlain became President of the Local Government Board in 1886, his first duty was to communicate by an official circular with the bodies who administered the poor law upon want of employment and slack trade. The least prosperous business at that time was shipbuilding. "In every shipbuilding port there were to be seen thousands of idle men vainly seeking for an honest day's work."[1] The tonnage built in 1886 was little more than a third of what it had been in 1883. Upon Jarrow and Sunderland in particular the blow fell with such severity that absolute destitution prevailed. Mr. Chamberlain's circular, to which his successor, Mr. Stansfeld, adhered, represented the fixed policy of his department, which was that local effort could alone cope with local distress. A leading Trade Unionist, Mr. Drummond, then secretary to the London Society of Compositors, replied at once to the circular by claiming that the standard rate of wages should be officially acknowledged. This was a departure from the doctrine of unlimited

1886.

Depression of trade.

The standard rate of wages.

[1] Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 364.

1886. competition, of accepting the lowest tender for the sake of the tax-payer. It was argued that the State ought not to be a bad employer; that if a Minister of the Crown, a trustee for the public, employed a firm of contractors, he became indirectly responsible for the way in which they treated their workmen; and that the encouragement of "sweating," or starvation wages, was a public crime.

In this same year Mr. Charles Booth, an eminently patriotic merchant and ship-owner, began his costly, laborious, and most valuable inquiries into the social condition of London. The publication by instalments of Mr. Booth's great work, *Labour and Life of the People*, which did not begin till 1889, was a social event of the first importance. Some of Mr. Booth's statistics, most carefully compiled by competent assistants, were appalling. Well-nigh a third of the population in London, a million and a quarter of human creatures, proved to be living in chronic poverty, and in some districts the proportion was more than half. The knowledge of these facts gave a considerable impetus to Socialism, and to demands for the regulation of adult labour. The new Unionists, of whom John Burns was the ablest and the most prominent, accused the Trade Unions as then managed of two principal faults. In the first place they were becoming, it was said, friendly societies, benefit clubs, rather than militant organisations. In the second place, they formed an exclusive aristocracy of labour, for the compulsory payment of a shilling a week shut out thousands who might otherwise have joined them. It appeared that the Trade Union Congress did not represent ten per cent of the wage-earning class. The Miners' Federation was, however, growing with great rapidity, and demanding by

Social statistics of labour.

John Burns.

large majorities the legal limitation of labour in mines to eight hours a day, though in Northumberland and Durham there was practical unanimity against it. In 1888 the Trade Union Congress, meeting at Bradford, declared that all land was the property of the nation, which the nation ought to resume. More practical steps were taken in the following year. The London School Board and the London County Council both adopted the principle which the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress laid down, insisting as a term of every contract signed on their behalf that the contractors should pay the standard rate of wages to their men. Not till two years afterwards, in February 1891, did the House of Commons, on the motion of Mr. Sydney Buxton, Member for Poplar, resolve that the Government should follow the example set by these representative assemblies of Londoners. 1888. 1891.

But the great event of 1889 in the world of labour was the London Dock Strike. No class of workmen in England had less organisation than the London dockers. The stevedores, who packed the cargoes, required some amount of skill, and they had formed a union. The lightermen, who brought the goods by river to the ship's side, had also a union, and were legally licensed for their employment. But a dock labourer of the ordinary kind needed no more than physical strength, and men took to the docks who could get work nowhere else. They were engaged by the day, or even by the hour. Their employment was casual, and yet they struggled for it at the dock gates. Fourpence or fivepence an hour was as much as they could hope to earn, and their precarious condition was deplorable. They were said not to make on an average more than seven shillings a week, or less than the poorest of the agricultural labourers. 1889. The Dock Strike.

1889. Chiefly through the exertions of John Burns and Ben Tillett, these men at length combined. On the 13th of August 1889 they struck, coming out from the East and West India Docks to the number of two thousand five hundred. Their chief demands were for sixpence an hour as the lowest wage, and four hours as the shortest time, of a docker's engagement. The second point the directors were willing to concede. On the first, the "docker's tanner," as Mr. Burns called it, they were inflexible, and the strike extended until a hundred thousand men were idle. The lightermen and stevedores, the corn and timber porters, struck from sympathy, so that for ten weeks the trade to and from the Port of London was paralysed. Public opinion was upon the whole friendly to the strikers, who committed no breach of order, though they may sometimes have carried picketing beyond the line which distinguishes it from intimidation. They were under the masterly control of Mr. Burns, who displayed all the qualities of a statesman in the guidance of this gigantic movement. The difficulty of supporting such a number of persons was immense, and might have been insuperable if help had not come from an unexpected source. Subscriptions raised at home, many of them generous, did not amount to twenty thousand pounds. But Australia sent thirty thousand, and the men were saved. The ship-owners and shipping companies began to put pressure upon the Dock Directors, whom they did not hesitate to accuse of blundering incompetence. Some of these companies had wharves of their own, and there were private wharfingers who disliked being sacrificed to the obstinacy of other people. They, therefore, offered to concede the men's terms; and although the Strike Committee refused in August a partial settlement, at the

beginning of September they were able, by an arrangement with the wharf-owners, to divide the enemy. When the men had gone back to work on the wharves at not less than sixpence an hour, or two shillings a job, negotiation with the Dock Directors became simpler and easier. Distinguished men, in whom both sides had confidence, took the matter up. The Lord Mayor[1] and the Bishop of London[2] were officially interested. The Bishop was fortunately a strong, resolute, able, practical man. But even more influential than he was the head of the Roman Catholic Church in England. After the death of Pius the Ninth in 1878 Cardinal Manning had gradually ceased to be a power at the Vatican. He became less active in making proselytes, devoting himself with characteristic vigour to works of philanthropy and benevolence. Ardent in the crusade against alcohol, and a total abstainer, he stinted himself to the necessaries of life, and gave everything he could spare to the poor. He did not dislike to see his own simplicity and asceticism contrasted with the pomp and splendour of an Anglican prelate, though there was not much of either in Bishop Temple. Manning became the idol of the Catholic poor, chiefly Irish, in the East End, not the less so because he had vehemently adopted the cause of Home Rule. Although the Directors may have regarded him as a dangerous Socialist, they could not venture to ignore him, and he prided himself on his knowledge of business, having been originally destined to a mercantile career. With these three peacemakers were joined Sir John Lubbock, Member for the University of London, and his son-in-law, Mr. Sydney Buxton, many of whose constituents in Poplar were on strike. 1889.

[1] Sir James Whitehead. [2] Dr. Temple.

1889. After several attempts to settle it had failed, this great strike terminated on the 16th of September in the complete acceptance of the men's terms, having cost the shareholders a sum variously estimated at two and three millions sterling.

Union of unskilled labour.

There was immediately formed a Docks, Wharf, Riverside, and General Labourers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland, with an entrance fee of sixpence, and a weekly contribution of twopence. In the course of twelve months two hundred thousand unskilled labourers had joined this or some similar organisation.[1] At the same time with the Dockers' Strike the gas-workers of the metropolis demanded and obtained an eight hours' day. But the South Metropolitan Gas Company revoked the concession, and re-established the old shift of twelve hours, offering as a set-off a scheme of profit-sharing devised by their able chairman, Mr. Livesey.[2] The strike against this arrangement failed, and the Union was defeated at a cost of seventy-five thousand pounds. The Dockers' Strike, on the other hand, was the greatest victory ever won for unskilled labour, for the men who had hitherto been most incapable of helping themselves.

1890. That the hours of work should be the same in all countries is a desirable, if not an attainable, ideal.

The International Conference of Labour.

As a step towards uniformity in that and other respects, an International Conference was held at Berlin in 1890 on the laws relating to labour. The British delegates, one of whom, Sir John Gorst, was a member of the Government, were instructed by Lord Salisbury to withhold their assent from any proposals fixing the hours of labour for men, or limiting the amount of production. They were, however, permitted, and

[1] Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 393.
[2] Afterwards Sir George Livesey.

indeed enjoined, to support the further exemption of the young, and the earliest age at which children could be employed in factories was by the Conference unanimously raised to twelve. When the Government introduced a Factory Bill to carry out the recommendations of a Lords' Committee on Sweating, to insist upon better sanitary arrangements, and to prevent women from working more than twelve hours in the twenty-four, Mr. Sydney Buxton carried against the Government a clause putting the limit of age for children, which had been ten, not at twelve, but at eleven. It is extraordinary that Mr. Matthews, the Home Secretary, should have objected to this proposal, which really fell short of what humanity required. But he believed that he had the opinion of the working classes on his side. Unfortunately there are a great many parents who consider large families as the gift of Heaven, and a child as an animated instrument for making money. A clause for including laundries in the Bill was defeated, though a mass meeting of laundresses was held in Hyde Park to support it. This was an instance, as the Dockers' Strike had been, of organisation, or at least the beginning of it, among those hitherto unorganised. The laundresses, however, had no votes, and not a hundred men could be brought to vote for them in the House of Commons. An Irish Nationalist took the objection, which has since been only too successfully raised, that the laundries of Catholic convents should not be open to domiciliary visits. The grossest acts of oppression have notoriously been committed in the name of religion, and sweating, at which this Act was especially aimed, is quite as possible, though it may not be as probable, in a convent laundry as in any factory or workshop.

1890.

The limit of age for child-labour. June 18, 1891.

The grievance of the laundresses.

So far as the general public were concerned, the

1890. characteristic of the New Unionism was its demand for legislative interference with the hours of labour. At the Trade Union Congress for 1890, held at Liverpool in September, Mr. Burns carried by a small majority a motion for the legal establishment in all trades of an eight hours' day. It is easy to pass such resolutions. To frame Bills upon them which could be seriously presented to Parliament is a very different affair. The Old Unionism was always practical. The New Unionism seemed at that time to expect all things in an hour, and at the same time to be satisfied with an abstract vote in a powerless Assembly for a form of words. The leaders of this movement, of whom Mr. Burns was far the most influential, succeeded in capturing the Congress, and could persuade it to adopt any proposal of a Socialistic kind. Then the delegates returned to their homes, and the world went on as before.

The eight hours' day.

The Government, by way of doing something, appointed in 1890 a Royal Commission on Labour, with Lord Hartington in the chair, on which the working classes were fairly represented. It sat for several years, took a vast amount of evidence, and produced reports of considerable interest, but of small practical value. The New Unionists were not disposed to co-operate with any political party. Although Mr. Sydney Buxton, who had passed the Resolution against sweating in Government contracts, was a Liberal, he had received some Conservative support, despite the opposition of the Conservative Ministry. Mr. Burns, however, was willing to undertake work in Parliament as well as on the County Council, and he knew very well that he could not be elected unless he stood on one side or the other. All the working men in the House of Commons were favourable to Home Rule for Ireland, if only because they believed

The Labour Commission.

that the question would stand in the way of social reforms until it was settled. But it is inconsistent with the representative principle to treat these men, however estimable in themselves, as the sole spokesmen of their order. Soldiers in Parliament do not represent the army, nor lawyers the bar. The votes of the Trade Union Congress produced in those days little effect upon the representation of the working classes at Westminster. Their real influence was felt out of doors. They began steadily to organise, to prepare for the future, and to raise the means for running candidates of their own, justly confident in the ultimate success of wisely directed effort. 1890.

In 1894, however, at Norwich the Congress adopted, on the proposal of Mr. Keir Hardie, Member of Parliament for South-West Ham, a motion which alarmed a good many people not usually nervous or timid. By a very large majority the delegates pronounced in favour of "nationalising," or making public property, all the means of production, distribution, and exchange. This is Socialism, pure and simple. If actually carried out, which it hardly could be in this country except by revolutionary means, it would confiscate the property of every one except the idle rich. No practical consequence followed the vote, and the majority of Trade Unionists were certainly not in favour of abolishing private ownership. But this curious freak of irresponsible idealism had an indirect result neither desired nor contemplated by most of the men who took part in it. It strengthened and consolidated the forces of Conservatism all over England. Although Lord Rosebery was no more a Socialist than Lord Salisbury, and many Radicals were sturdy individualists, the most obvious way of protesting against the spread of Socialistic ideas

1894.

The nationalisation of capital.

The dread of Socialism.

1894. was to make the next House of Commons Conservative. So long as Trade Unions stick to their proper business, their value to the working classes can scarcely be exaggerated. Their annual Congresses, interesting as many of the speeches delivered at them are, give a very imperfect notion of what the delegates really think and feel. On this occasion they also voted for the exclusion of pauper aliens, which working men in the House of Commons have always opposed.

The Plymouth case.

A case arising out of a strike at Plymouth seriously affected for a time the rights of trade unions. The unionists employed by a coal merchant called upon him through their secretaries to dismiss his other workmen, and threatened to leave their own work if he did not. He refused, and they struck. The magistrates convicted the three secretaries of intimidation under Cross's Act, the Act of 1875, and fined them £20 each. The Recorder of Plymouth, Mr. Bompas, affirmed this decision, and it seemed as if strikes would be very difficult in the future. But the Lord Chief Justice,[1] and four other Judges of the Queen's Bench

July 19, 1891.

Division, held that the Recorder was wrong, and set his judgment aside. There had been no use, and no threat, of violence. Merely "to tell an employer that if he employs workmen of a certain sort, the workmen of another sort in his employ will be told to leave him, and to tell their men when the employer will not give way, to leave their work, use no force, and go home," was not, said Lord Coleridge, intimidation within the meaning of the statute, or at all. Nor could he and his brother Judges agree with the Recorder in his doctrine that any strike which would have the effect of injuring an employer was indictable at common law. If it had been so, strikes would

[1] Lord Coleridge.

have been impossible, and the statute which excepted combinations of labourers from the crime of conspiracy might as well have been repealed.[1] Later in the same year the House of Lords, in the case of the steamship *Mogul*, held that exclusive dealing, called in Ireland boycotting, and there punished with imprisonment, was perfectly lawful when adopted by merchants in the course of competition for the sake of profit. If the motive of the competitors was the furtherance of their own interests, not the gratification of malice or ill will, they might, so it was held by the highest tribunal in the United Kingdom, proceed to their end through threats of combining for any purpose not criminal in itself. A combination to drive other traders out of the market by temporarily doing business at a loss for the purpose of underselling them was neither indictable as a conspiracy nor actionable as a tort.[2]

1891.

The *Mogul* case. Dec. 18.

Trade Unions, though they depend not less closely than associations of employers upon the commercial prosperity of Great Britain, and indeed of the world, were not directly concerned in the great financial crisis of 1890. But the City of London, the most important of all financial centres, cannot be shaken to its foundations without a shock to the whole fabric of business. In the month of November the great firm of Baring Brothers, which had come to be regarded as almost a national institution, was threatened with utter ruin. The Directors had imprudently involved themselves in Argentine speculations, falsely called securities; and when these collapsed, it seemed as if the Barings must go too. Nothing since Black Friday 1866,[3] when Overend and Gurney fell, not

The failure of the Barings.

[1] Curran *v.* Treleaven, L.R. 2 Q.B.D. 560-563.
[2] See *Mogul Steamship Company*, L.R. Appeal Cases, 1892, pp. 25-60.
[3] See vol. iii. pp. 34-36.

1890. even the failure of the Glasgow Bank in 1878[1] had excited such general panic and dismay. The sum at stake could only be counted in millions, and thousands of individuals saw bankruptcy staring them in the face. With singular courage and promptitude, the Bank of England came to the rescue. The Chairman of the Bank, Mr. Lidderdale, with Mr. Goschen's approval and consent as Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed to raise a fund by way of guarantee, and provided, with the assistance of other large banks, as much as seventeen millions sterling. As if to show that credit was international, the Bank of France sent over a large amount of French gold, and a frightful catastrophe was averted. On the 24th of November Messrs. Baring and Company were registered under the Limited Liability Acts with a capital of one million, and the firm was afterwards restored to its high position. Mr. Lidderdale was sworn of the Privy Council, and his conduct was almost universally admired. It could not and cannot be denied that public intervention, which in this case was almost Ministerial, to save speculative traders from the consequences of their own rashness, is against all the received maxims of economic science. There are, however, exceptions to most rules, and the supreme law of public safety might fairly be held applicable to a situation which menaced with overthrow the credit of London.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 88.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRIUMPH OF RITUALISM

ALTHOUGH the indiscriminate use of the episcopal veto upon ecclesiastical prosecutions tended to preserve the outward peace of the Church, a stray Ritualist was still at times to be found in a court of law. One such, a Lancashire clergyman, Mr. Bell Cox, had the merit, or luck, of incidentally raising a grave constitutional issue. For defiance of the Public Worship Act Mr. Cox had been committed to Walton gaol by Lord Penzance under the statute of 1813 which substituted imprisonment for excommunication. On technical grounds of no particular interest or importance he was released by the Queen's Bench Division under a writ of *habeas corpus*. The Court of Appeal, thinking the reasons inadequate, ordered Mr. Cox back into custody, and then he appealed to the House of Lords. There the question was raised, and twice argued, whether an order of release under the famous statute of Charles the Second was not necessarily final. Five Law Lords against two decided that it was. Even the Lords Justices below admitted that there would have been no appeal before the Judicature Act. But they contended that that Act gave the right to both parties, except in a "criminal cause or matter," which this was not. The Lord Chancellor[1] and

1887. The case of Mr. Bell Cox.

May 16, 1887.

Finality of a *habeas corpus*.

[1] Lord Halsbury.

1890. Aug. 5. the majority of the Peers held in accordance with good sense, and with the spirit of the constitution, that an ancient privilege of British subjects could only be taken away by express words, and could not be abolished by inference.[1] Before 1875 an applicant for a writ of *habeas corpus* could go to every Court in Westminster Hall, and each Court was bound to hear the application on its merits afresh. It was the only case in which an unsuccessful suitor might, if he could prove a grievance, bring an action against a Judge. An appeal from a judgment which restored a man to freedom, and virtually, if not technically, quashed a conviction, seemed an anomaly and a solecism in English law. That a clerical sacerdotalist should be the instrument for preserving the liberty of the subject was an accident, though a droll one. The essential thing was that the liberty should be preserved.

No Bishop was more strongly determined to prevent ecclesiastical litigation than Dr. Temple of London. He had himself been persecuted as a heretic, and though he felt no sympathy with ritualism, he would not allow a hard-working clergyman to be disturbed, merely because he broke, however deliberately and habitually, the law of the land. On the same principle, and perhaps with more reason, he refused to let a complaint that the new reredos at St. Paul's was idolatrous be tried in the Court of Arches under the Public Worship Regulation Act. He had attempted himself, he said, to inhibit a reredos at Exeter. He had been overruled, and he would have no more of it.[2] Lord Coleridge thought that the two cases were distinguishable, that the Bishop's reasons were bad, and that the question ought to be tried. His

The reredos at St. Paul's.

[1] See Cox *v.* Hakes, L.R. Appeal Cases, vol. xv. pp. 506-547.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 420.

decision was reversed by the Court of Appeal, and the House of Lords finally held that the discretion of the Bishop, being absolute, could not be reviewed.[1] Whatever may have been the case in 1840, when the Church Discipline Act was passed, there can be no doubt that in 1874 Parliament intended to confer at least a judicial discretion upon the Bishop; and when no court can examine the nature of the discretion exercised, the epithet "judicial" may as well be left out. 1890.

The Bishop was to determine whether a clergyman should be tried. But who was to try a Bishop? This question arose in 1888, when the Bishop of Lincoln[2] was charged with various infringements of the ecclesiastical law. It was alleged against him, or about him, that, not in his cathedral, but in the church of St. Peter Gowts at Lincoln, he had used the mixed chalice, allowed lighted candles on the communion-table, and in other ways too trivial to be specified infringed the regulations of the rubric. Frivolous as this case might seem, and in its substance really was, it excited, for two principal reasons, a considerable stir. In the first place, the high and saintly character of the Bishop made it in the eyes of those who knew him a scandal that he should be treated, even conditionally, as a culprit. In the second place, it was not easy to provide him with a competent tribunal. After some trouble, and much searching of ecclesiastical minds, the Bishop was cited to appear before the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace. For such an opportunity Archbishop Benson was just the man. He loved ceremonial observances, he revelled in the niceties of Church discipline, and he was a learned ecclesiologist. Although several bishops, including The Bishop of Lincoln's case.

[1] July 30, 1891.

[2] Dr. King.

1890. Temple and Stubbs, sat as his assessors, they were only there to help him. The jurisdiction which he claimed to exercise was his alone. Bishop Stubbs, the most erudite of his coadjutors, did not believe that there was any such jurisdiction. He passed his time in writing very flippant notes, and repeating to himself the formula, "It is not a Court; it is an Archbishop sitting in his library."[1] The
Nov. 21. Archbishop, who was never flippant, delivered an elaborate and polished judgment. On most points his Grace acquitted the Bishop. The mixed chalice, if the wine and water were mingled before the service, was held to be legal. The lighted candles were also condoned. The only points found against the defendant were that he had not consecrated the elements "before the people," and that he had made the sign of the cross in benediction, which was not a ceremony of the English Church. On these points the Bishop of Lincoln set the clergy an example by submitting to his Metropolitan. Where he had been acquitted, the prosecutors appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. That the Queen in Council should have the power, as she undoubtedly had, of overruling the Primate on matters purely ecclesiastical is perhaps as good an illustration of Erastianism as could well be found since the days of Henry the Eighth. High Churchmen talked a great deal of what they would do if the Archbishop's decision were reversed, forgetting that the crucial issue was not the particular judgment the Committee would give, but its right to give any
Aug. 2, 1892. judgment at all. When it came it was mild indeed. The Archbishop, though some of his rulings were hard to reconcile with previous cases, was entirely upheld, and the Committee went so far as to say that the use of lighted candles un-

[1] *Letters of William Stubbs*, p. 327.

necessary for illumination was not therefore ceremonial. Conscious that this was new doctrine on old ground, the Lord Chancellor[1] laid down a proposition thus described in the head-note of the case: "The rule of finality applicable to decisions of the Privy Council in relation to rights of property is not equally binding as regards decisions which relate to ritual and ecclesiastical practice and depend to some extent upon the accuracy of historical investigation." It will be seen that the distinction is not between the Privy Council and the House of Lords or any other Court, but between ceremony and property, observances on public occasions, and principles by which ownership passes, or inheritance descends. One thoroughly sound and rational proposition is established by this case. "When it is important to ascertain ancient facts of a public nature, the law permits historical works to be referred to as evidence thereof." The lawyer who knows no history is not much better prepared for his business than the historian who knows no law.[2] 1892.

The Clergy Discipline Bill, passed in 1892, made it simpler and less expensive to remove clergymen guilty of immoral conduct from the parishes they had disgraced. The Bill was passed by the Government, with the assistance of Mr. Gladstone, against obstructive opposition from a few Welsh Radicals, who protested against anything being done by Parliament for the established Church. This is not fair fighting. Disestablishment and disendowment are legitimate objects of political warfare. So long as the Church is established and endowed, Parliament should be jealous of parting with its supreme authority to any clerical or ecclesiastical association. But it is

The Clergy Discipline Bill.

[1] Lord Halsbury.

[2] See Read *v.* the Bishop of Lincoln, L.R. Appeal Cases, 1892.

1892. neither Liberal nor Christian for Nonconformists, because they dislike the Church, to make the deprivation of scandalous incumbents difficult or impossible. The Act had nothing to do with doctrine or ritual of any kind. It dealt solely with offences against the criminal or moral law, and the principal effect of it was to provide that conviction in a court of justice on a serious charge should render the person convicted incapable of holding an ecclesiastical benefice. Parliament can always legislate for the Church when sufficient reason is shown.

The cause of disestablishment, never really served by such methods as these, made no progress, but rather receded, during the Liberal Government and Parliament of 1892. Ecclesiastical prosecutions were stopped by the Bishops, and those Ritualists who persisted in disobeying the law were left to their own devices. They were comparatively few, and only martyrdom, the mild martyrdom of the nineteenth century, made them attractive, or even conspicuous. The Newcastle Programme, a collection of odds and ends, included proposals for severing from the State both the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Church of England in Wales. But the former task was not even undertaken, and the latter involved the Government which undertook it in a series of disasters. Both Churches were strengthened, not weakened, by attacks which were merely annoying, and too feeble to be dangerous. Although tithes and teinds are national property, whether they be impressed with an ecclesiastical trust or no, they do not come from the pockets of the people, and are never felt for a practical grievance, being paid by the landlord as a charge upon the soil. The fall in the value of agricultural land had by the last decade of the nineteenth century so much im-

Disestablishment set back.

poverished the clergy that the Church of England 1892.
no longer appeared the embodiment of substantial wealth amongst the free and voluntary churches of the poor. In point of fact it was the cheapest Church, and strengthened its hold upon the masses more successfully than its Nonconformist rivals. Political Nonconformity was losing ground. Home Rule had made a schism in the ranks, and there was little in the Newcastle Programme to heal the breach. Lord Rosebery was suspected of Erastianism, and the Nonconformist conscience was made uneasy by his addiction to the turf. Mr. Chamberlain, on the other hand, was for political purposes a Nonconformist, and had usually voted in favour of disestablishment when it came before the House. Mr. Gladstone, though a High Churchman from early manhood, had been able to rouse the enthusiasm of the free churches by his earnest piety, and the loftiness of his moral tone. After his retirement they were left to themselves, and many of them who had voted for Home Rule in 1892 abandoned it in 1895. Home Rule without Gladstone seemed impossible, and to preach it was like flogging a dead horse. Mr. Chamberlain was at least a practical statesman, and social reform was more tempting than constitutional change. The House of Lords had been too strong for a Home Rule Government. A Unionist Government would be able to rely upon their active assistance. Not since 1874 had Liberalism been so nearly dead in England and Scotland as it was in 1895. The threatened campaign against the Lords was a laughing-stock. The Welsh Bishops were triumphant. The Church of Scotland trampled on its enemies. The Church of England seemed to have none. "The trade" with their tied houses laughed at the Local Veto Bill. Every institution, as well ecclesiastical as temporal, felt that it had a new

1895. lease of life. The national Church in particular, saved by Home Rule from all immediate peril to its secular stability, had time and leisure for preparation, in case its usefulness as a branch of the civil service should ever be challenged again.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

THE survey of half a century suggests to all reflective minds a number of questions which the reader can answer for himself, and which need not therefore be answered for him. On the other hand, it may perhaps be expected that an historian, though in the main a chronicler and narrator, should pass some judgment upon the tendency and significance of those events which it has been his duty to record. In 1846 England was still a predominantly aristocratic nation. Before 1896 it had become predominantly democratic. These, it may be said, are words. Disraeli would have added that they were unmeaning words. But that criticism evades, and does not assist, the solution of a problem which must be solved. What lies behind forms of government, and phases of society, is the soul of a people. When the Whigs came into office after the repeal of the Corn Laws, the House of Lords was almost as strong as the House of Commons, and the working classes had, with few exceptions, no Parliamentary votes. Although free trade had done more for them than for any other class of the community, they had not been consulted before its adoption, and no one could say with accurate knowledge how they would have voted upon it. Some of the staunchest among

free-traders were opposed to Factory Acts and Trade Unions, to the right of combination, and to legislative safeguards against the accidents of trade. It is not true that workmen were neglected before they possessed the franchise. A complete code of industrial legislation for the benefit of women and children was established by the zeal and energy of Lord Shaftesbury fourteen years before household suffrage became the law of the land. If this was in part due to the longing of the squire for revenge upon the manufacturer, it sprang in great measure from a philanthropic temper which expected no reward in either votes or fame. At the very time when political enfranchisement of workmen was regarded with horror and dismay as the sure precursor of revolution, employers were compelled by Parliament, at the risk of diminished profits, to provide for the health and comfort of the employed. Elementary education, on the other hand, was left to the churches and to voluntary bodies, aided by small grants from the Exchequer. The children of the poor were scarcely educated at all, and it was gravely argued, even by Whigs, that to teach them would make them discontented with their lot. Higher education was left to the universities, which were very expensive, and confined to the Church of England.

Why did the dumb and unknown forces thus neglected not break out in revolutionary violence? Once after 1846 they tried. But the Chartist rising in 1848 was a ludicrous failure, as was the almost simultaneous rebellion of Smith O'Brien in Ireland. Ireland lies apart, and the Fenianism of the sixties was in its inception a really dangerous movement. The Irish people, speaking generally, have never been loyal to the Union, and Irish repealers remained in the House of Commons to get what they could for Ireland by alliance with

the Whigs, or, when that failed, by intimidation. Even the disfranchisement of the working classes did not make Ireland loyal, though the famine made her impotent. England could more easily govern her most distant possessions than the sister people at her doors, who looked for sympathy not to London, but to New York. On this side of St. George's Channel the final failure of Chartism under Feargus O'Connor left the working men without a purpose or an aim until their trade unions gradually taught them to concentrate upon the suffrage, and to demand it as a right. They began in the north of England. It was not till 1866 that London joined in the cry for reform, and taught Disraeli, ever watchful of such movements, that a reduction of the franchise might give a new lease of power to his party, as it ultimately, though not immediately, did. Before the unsuccessful attempt of Gladstone, whom Disraeli "dished," working men were regarded as food for powder, or human machines, slaves in everything but name, for the production, distribution, and exchange of wealth. Although they fought like heroes in the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, neither their privations nor their achievements excited the sympathetic interest of the class which held the keys of power. The cotton famine that devastated Lancashire in 1862 and 1863 had the effect of bringing all classes together, of removing asperities, of showing how small are the superficial differences, as compared with the fundamental similarity, of various classes and degrees. The moral enthusiasm for the cause of the North, the cause of freedom, which prevailed among men made destitute by the war, is one of the noblest sentiments recorded in our national life. To be afraid of such men made timidity ridiculous. Not to be proud of them showed inherent baseness of soul. Lord Derby,

who made the "leap in the dark," knew what these men were, and had taken a prominent share in providing for their support. When "the lower orders" had been enfranchised, and ceased to be so called, they were found to be quite as conservative as any other class of Englishmen, and not more tenacious of their rights. Yet almost twenty years elapsed before the agricultural labourer was placed on the same footing as the urban artisan, and allowed a voice in the expenditure of taxes which from time immemorial he had been compelled to pay.

When the last great Tory statesman had been converted to Liberalism, the Conservative party which he founded broke up and disappeared. The Peelites became Liberals. The Protectionists, after clinging helplessly for a few years to the ruins of Protection, followed a chief of genius along less discredited paths. Disraeli would have nothing more to do with Protection. He had never believed in it, and to simulate belief in it when it was no longer popular would have been a task as thankless as disagreeable. He took up the more promising cry of social reform, with which, but for his constitutional indolence, he might have resuscitated and rejuvenated his followers. But, with all his brilliant and splendid gifts, he had no constructive faculty. The details of business bored him, and the measures for which he got the credit were chiefly due to Lord Cross. He never affected the masses, as Bright and Gladstone did. They did not take him seriously, nor think that he meant what he said. Gladstone and Bright were not merely orators. Any working man could see that one of the two took off taxes, and the other carried reform. Disraeli coined his epigrams, shrugged his shoulders, and, in the phrase current at the time, stole the clothes of the Whigs while they

were bathing. He had at the bottom a profound contempt for Gentiles, and the British workman returned his disdain. The idea that Disraeli was ever popular with the labouring classes is a fiction. He was popular with the literary classes, with London society, with the county of Buckingham, and with the House of Commons. The people at large preferred a haughty aristocrat like Lord Derby, who never flattered them, but always respected them, because he respected himself. Lord Beaconsfield's Eastern policy did undoubtedly fascinate a section of the artisans in London, Sheffield, and a few other large towns. But the leaders of the unions regarded it with abhorrence, and would have supported Gladstone if he had denounced it even more strongly than he did. Before Lord Beaconsfield's death his influence was defunct, though it was nominally revived afterwards by the Primrose League.

When Mr. Gladstone adopted the cause of Home Rule with a devouring energy which made him indifferent to other questions, he lost his hold upon working men. Many of them were Home Rulers. But even they could not keep up their interest in it year after year to the exclusion of their own affairs. They regarded the Liberals as played out, hewers of wood and drawers of water for Irish Nationalism. It was not wholesome for them to be deprived of the larger political prospect which enlivens and sweetens public life. The eight hours' day, the nationalisation of land, even the payment of members, are imperfect and inadequate material to exercise the minds of a party or a class. When the suffrage was high, before 1867, it was easier to stir the feelings of the workmen for causes outside themselves than it became under a more liberal system. A remarkable exception was the case of Bulgaria in 1876. But

that was largely due to the eloquence of a single man, and it was suddenly cooled by Russia's declaration of war. When Gladstone's power waned, and he became leader of the Irish rather than the English people, the trade unionists, who could not follow Lord Salisbury, followed their own devices. This accounts in some degree for the origin of the Labour Party, which has since grown to such remarkable dimensions. If Mr. Chamberlain had succeeded Mr. Gladstone, he might have rallied the forces of democracy to a new political standard. When he allied himself with the Conservatives, no obvious successor to Gladstone remained, and a disputed succession was one cause of the rout in 1895.

What has preserved the people of England from revolution since 1688? The knowledge that they could get their own way without it. Many as are the blunders that the House of Lords have made, they have never deliberately resisted the people's declared will. The most they have done is to deny by implication that that will was correctly represented by the House of Commons. In 1893 they turned out to be right. If the general election two years afterwards had resulted in another victory for Home Rule, no one doubts that the Lords would have given way. The old doctrine of co-ordinate authority between the two Houses is quite extinct. The most that the Lords claim is to be a chamber of review, and a barrier, a very frail barrier, against haste. If they were impartial, their position would be a sound one. What saps and weakens it is their complete subservience to Tory Administrations, whose bidding they do with uncritical docility. But of course these Administrations command majorities in the House of Commons, and are therefore entitled to say that they have the people behind them. It is

thus impossible for Liberals to attack the House of Lords unless they are themselves in office, and then they are open to the charge of interested motives. The Lords have long ceased to be a feudal aristocracy. They represent property and the middle class, the great bulwark, as Aristotle hinted, against revolutions. During the period with which this History deals, the working classes, the men in receipt of weekly wages, were finding out by slow degrees the nature and extent of their own power. Partially enfranchised in 1867, fully enfranchised in 1885, it took them a long time to construct the machinery without which political power is wasted. The trade unions were excellent schools both of thought and of practice. Workmen who took the lead in them, and even those whose position was subordinate, acquired those habits of clear thinking and plain speaking, of acting together, and making allowance for each other, which are essential to combined efficiency.

The reform of local government begun in 1888, and completed in 1894, was little less than a social revolution. Following by a not unnatural sequence the extension of the county franchise in 1885, it entirely changed the attitude of landlords to their tenants, and of both to the agricultural labourers they employed. The cheapness of corn, and the consequent diminution of rents, due not less to steamships and submarine telegraphy than to free trade, obliged country gentlemen to keep strict accounts, as if they were in business, and at the same time to justify their administration of local affairs in the eyes of the common folk around them. Being, for the most part, men of sense and spirit, they adapted themselves to their altered circumstances without murmuring or false pride. The majority of them enjoyed, as they deserved,

the respect of their poorer neighbours, and had no difficulty in obtaining seats on the County Councils. There they met the farmers on a level with mutual confidence and esteem. On Parish, and sometimes on District, Councils they sat with labourers, to the benefit of both and of the public in general. No class of Englishmen have ever proved unfit to share power. None have ever been fit to monopolise it. That only the well-to-do have a stake in the country is a transparently fallacious proposition. But no argumentative exposure of a fallacy has half the effect of a practical and experimental disproof. Were local self-government valuable for no other purpose, it would have been worth establishing to promote the union of classes, as a step towards the goal when class shall be no more. If I may be permitted to draw a moral at the end of this book, it shall be at least an English one. The vicissitudes, neither few nor slight, through which this nation passed in the second half of the nineteenth century, have tested the English character, and it has rung true. Party spirit, though often unreasonable and unfair, has never shaken nor disturbed the sober, rational patriotism upon which the position of a country in the world depends. As a fiery advocate becomes under the sense of duty an impartial judge, the most vehement Radical and the most stubborn Tory can join in harmony for national objects which are equally dear to both. If a foreign jurist could be made to understand the British Constitution, he would at once pronounce dogmatically that it was a crank machine. *E pur si muove.* And yet it moves. It moves because it has behind it the irresistible force of public spirit and national fibre. England has made many mistakes. Ireland is a standing reproach to the wisdom and capacity of her statesmen. But the exception of

Ireland proves the existence of the rule. No political fabric known to history has surpassed or rivalled the British Empire, which is a synonym for England, in promoting the peace, the happiness, and the progress of mankind.

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Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

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on 31 October, 2019